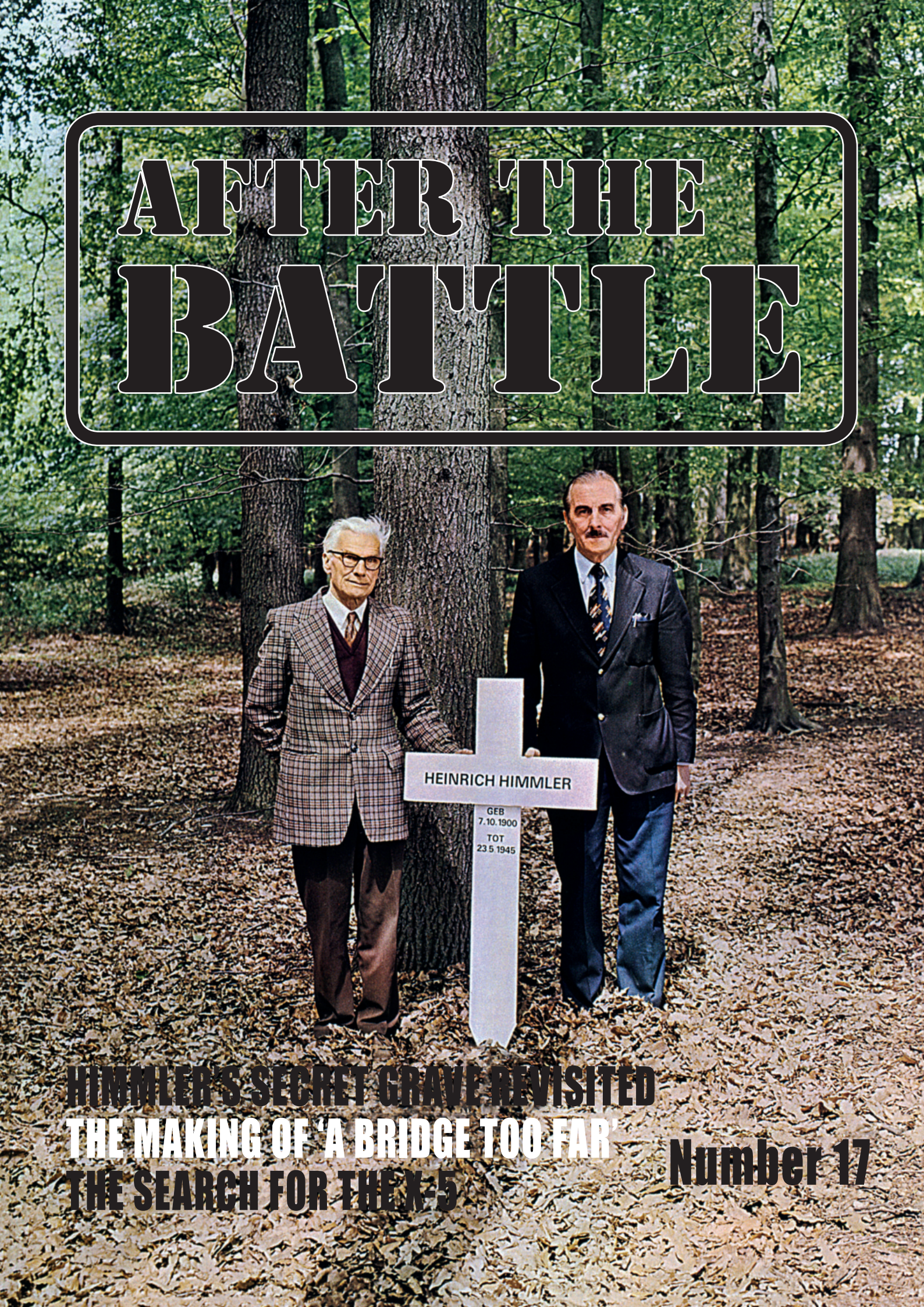
AFTER THE BATTLE



HIMMLER'S SECRET GRAVE REVISITED

THE MAKING OF 'A BRIDGE TOO FAR'

THE SEARCH FOR THE X-5

Number 17

NUMBER 17

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Front Cover: Ex-Sergeants William Ottery and Raymond Weston, the two soldiers that dug Heinrich Himmler's secret grave on Lüneburg Heath, photographed on their return visit in May 1977.

Centre Pages: Members of the 1976 Kaafjord expedition, led by Peter Cornish (in the mauve sweater), pictured with the recovered bow section of midget submarine *X7*. In the background, the original victualling quay which was used by the *Tirpitz* (Stuart Usher)

Back Cover: The Class 40 Bailey bridge at Lommel used by XXX Corps to break out of the Meuse-Escaut bridgehead at the beginning of Operation Market Garden in September 1944. Photograph taken April 1975; the bridge was dismantled in January 1977.

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HIMMLER'S SUICIDE

THE STORY SO FAR . . .

May 6, 1945
Himmler dismissed from office by Admiral Doenitz.
May 10, 1945
Himmler leaves Flensburg with 14 escorts.
May 12, 1945
Party crosses Elbe river.
May 18, 1945
Himmler group arrives at Bremervörde.
May 20, 1945
Twelve of party detained at bridge checkpoint.
May 22, 1945
Himmler arrested (although not identified) with two escorts. Spends night of May 22/23 in mill beside river Oste.
May 23, 1945
7.00 a.m. Himmler and escorts taken to Civil Internment Camp at Westertimke.
6.30 p.m. Trio arrive at 031 Civil Interrogation Camp at Barnstedt.
7.00 p.m. Himmler reveals his identity to Camp Commandant.
7.30 p.m. Intelligence staff officer from British Second army arrives to confirm identity.
9.45 p.m. Colonel Murphy, Chief of Intelligence, Second British Army, arrives to take charge of prisoner.
10.40 p.m. Colonel Murphy leaves Barnstedt for Lüneburg with Himmler.
10.45 p.m. Himmler arrives at 31a Uelzener Strasse.
11.14 p.m. Himmler commits suicide and dies whilst being examined by Dr. C. J. Wells.
May 24, 1945
American and Russian representatives view the body which is photographed by the press.
May 25, 1945
11.00 a.m. Autopsy and dental inspection.
5.00 p.m. Press conference.
May 26, 1945
7.00 a.m. Himmler buried in secret grave by four men; Major Norman Whittaker, CSM Edwin Austin and Sergeants William Ottery and Raymond Weston.
September 1, 1958
Major Whittaker dies.
February 8, 1972
CSM Austin dies.
August 15, 1975
Dr. C. J. Wells dies.
November 15, 1976
After the Battle magazine publishes first detailed account of Himmler's suicide.

NOW READ ON . . .

The Gravediggers return to Lüneburg

© After the Battle Magazine 1977

In November 1976, we published our story on the events leading up to the suicide of Heinrich Himmler and his subsequent secret burial on Lüneburg Heath. We have to admit now that we deliberately left out one important fact; the names of the two sergeants present at the burial who actually dug Himmler's grave. Although we knew their names, we had been unable to trace them and did not wish to embarrass them with publicity before speaking to them first — if in fact they were still alive. We also did not know, at that time, precisely what part they had played in the Himmler saga.

It was not until April 1977 that we finally made contact with Sergeant Raymond Weston. We learnt that he had kept in touch with his close wartime friend, Sergeant William Ottery, and a meeting was quickly arranged to discuss the events of May 1945. When the editor proposed that both men should return with him to revisit Lüneburg, they willingly agreed, as Bill Ottery said, 'To set the record straight, once and for all'.

The return trip to Germany was not proposed by *After the Battle* magazine without considerable forethought as to the implications involved. The original reason for keeping the grave location secret was to avoid the site becoming a shrine or rallying point for future Nazi followers and, quite rightly so, after the horrific record of murder and torture for which Himmler was responsible. Himmler was unique amongst the Nazi leaders who died at the end of the war, in that his was the only body not to have been cremated and therefore eliminated for good. After much thought, we decided that the original reasoning was still valid today.

All four men who carried out the burial were members of the British Second Army Defence Company — a unit specifically set up to guard the Army HQ. It comprised three platoons, each consisting of men from different regiments: one Welch, one Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and one Royal Norfolk Regiment with a troop from the Tank Corps. The CO was Major Norman Whittaker (The Loyal Regiment) and the Company Sergeant-Major was CSM Edwin Austin (6th East

SECOND ARMY TROOPS NEWS

No. 350 Sunday, 27 May 1945 0600 hrs

THE "BIG THREE" TO MEET SOON?

While touring his constituency of Woodford yesterday, Mr. Churchill told the citizens that the General Election must be no obstacle to an early meeting of the "Big Three".

FRENCH TO OCCUPY RHINELAND

General De Gaulle's Cabinet met yesterday to consider the zone allotted to France for occupation.

UNMARKED GRAVE FOR HIMMLER.

Himmler was buried yesterday in a wooded area not far from the house at Second Army H.Q. in which he committed suicide on Wednesday last.

Before this took place British Army surgeons took casts of his features and removed the brain and parts of the skull. The body was then wrapped in a blanket and conveyed in an army lorry to the site chosen for his burial.

There was no religious service, and the few soldiers present at the act of burial in unconsecrated ground are sworn to secrecy as to the whereabouts of his grave.

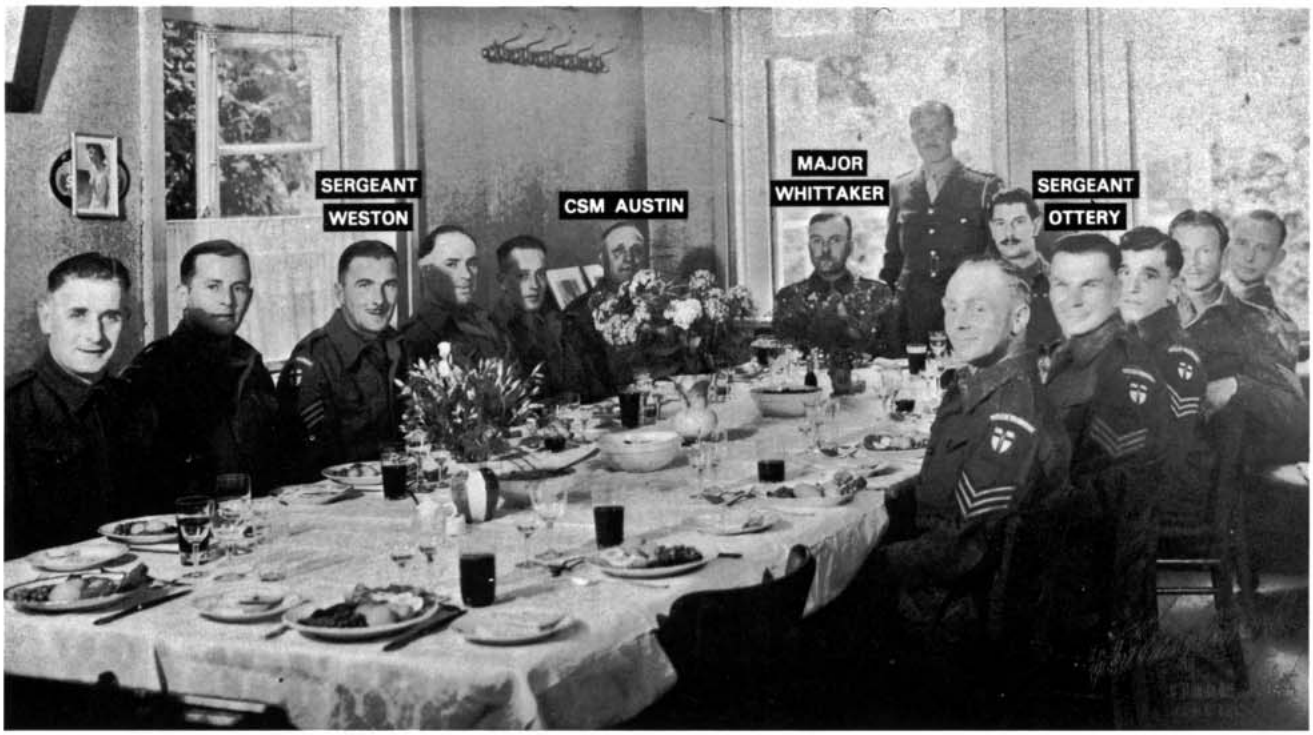
THE LANCASTER "ARIES" RETURNS.

Yesterday afternoon, the Lancaster bomber "Aries" returned to its base near Shrewsbury after an experimental flight over the North and Magnetic Poles. The aggregate

...considers ...ished. ...ited Mr. Herbert ... at the White House ... food distribution in ...

...ESTIES THE KING AND QUEEN are to visit the Channel Islands on June 6th, the anniversary of D-Day.

THE AIRCRAFT-CARRIER "FURIOUS" is to be retired from active service after 30 years afloat. Originally built as a cruiser, she was converted to carry 33 aircraft and a complement of 1200 officers and men. She has figured in several naval air actions off



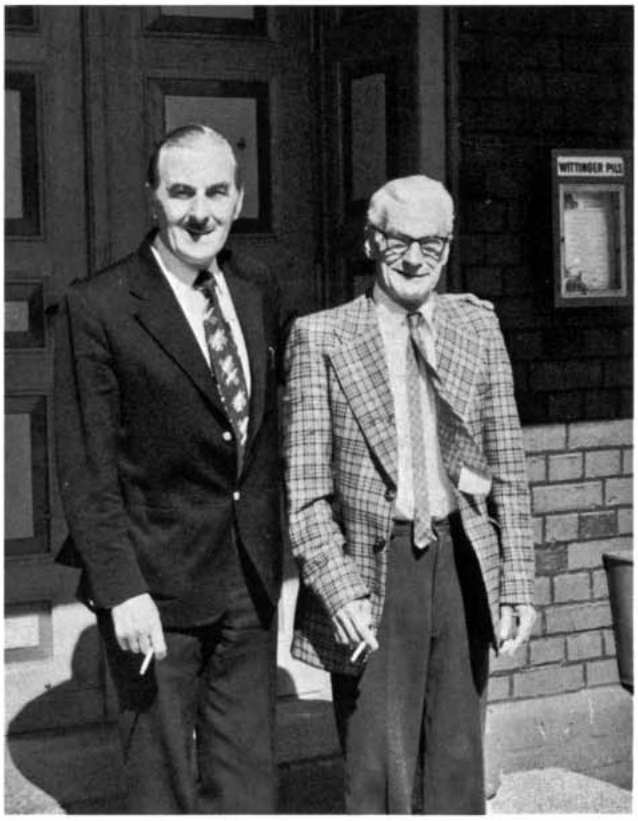
A picture taken by a German photographer at Major Whittaker's demob party in Bünde in August 1945.

Surreys/Pioneer Corps). Bill Ottery was the senior of the three sergeants in the Welch platoon, Ray Weston and Micky Fenlan being the other two. Although the three men involved in the burial with Major Whittaker (who died in 1958), were told to keep quiet over the location of the grave, they were not sworn to secrecy. CSM Austin (who died in 1972), who was the only one of the four interviewed by the BBC after the suicide, refused many requests to identify the grave, even going so far as to claim that he alone knew the location as he had taken the body out at night in a lorry and buried it singlehanded — a rather implausible story as the Sergeant-Major could not even drive!

However, as both Bill Ottery and Ray Weston have now retired, we felt it essential to safeguard their privacy. We therefore concluded a legal agreement with them which, apart from giving *After the Battle* magazine the exclusive right to their stories, has the effect of safeguarding the secret and them from undesirable publicity and channeling all enquiries which might follow from the publication of this story through the editor.

Unfortunately, before our arrangements to return to Germany were concluded, the story leaked to Bill Ottery's local press. It was quickly taken up by the *News of the World* which in turn led a well-known German magazine to attempt to get in on the act; all of

Sergeants Ray Weston and Bill Ottery photographed outside the hotel serving as the Second Army Defence Company Sergeants' Mess in Bad Lippspringe, just north of Paderborn.



Thirty-two years later, photographed outside our 'Sergeants' Mess' the Hotel Fehlhaber at Amelinghausen, base for our return visit.

which could have attracted the worst possible kind of publicity for what we were planning as a historical mission. Nevertheless, our trip to Germany in May 1977, thirty-two years after the event, was undertaken without incident although we took evasive measures to ensure there would not be a reception committee, official or unofficial, waiting for the three of us in Germany!

Bill and Ray had been demobbed at the end of 1945 and neither had been back to Germany since the end of the war. We knew the contrast they would find would be enormous and, as we sped through the German countryside, the thing that impressed them most was the cleanliness. In 1945, the roads had been littered with wreckage, abandoned vehicles, hoards of prisoners and refugees. Money then had no meaning; everything was at the barter level and Ray Weston made us both laugh when he produced a bar of chocolate. As Bill Ottery said, 'He hasn't moved with the times!'

After setting up base in Amelinghausen, south-west of Lüneburg, early the following morning we drove to 31a Uelzener Strasse. In 1945, this semi-detached house had been requisitioned by British Second Army Intelligence specifically for the interrogation of VIP prisoners and it had been guarded by the Second Army Defence Company, camped in the park at the rear of the house. The Sergeants' Mess, together with quarters for the NCOs, had been located in the adjoining house with the officers being accommodated in the rooms above.

When news of Himmler's imminent arrival at 31a had reached the Defence Company, Captain 'Taffy' Davies (the 2 i/c, acting as Orderly Officer at the time) had gone to the Sergeants' Mess and, following British Army custom, knocked and requested admittance. Receiving permission to do so, he had asked to speak to the Orderly Sergeant who, for that week, was Sergeant Ottery. Captain Davies told him to get the Cook Sergeant (Charlie Roper) to prepare sandwiches and hot drinks and appoint a three-man guard in charge of an NCO (Lance-Corporal Cyril Clark) and be ready to receive a visitor. Having done so, a small party, including Sergeant Ottery, had then stood waiting outside the house.

When the three-car convoy pulled up, Colonel Murphy (Second Army Intelligence Chief) had been first to emerge to be followed by a stooped figure incongruously dressed only in a British Army grey blanket and army boots

Bill and Ray outside No. 31a Uelzener Strasse, Lüneburg, where Himmler committed suicide (in the octagonal, ground-floor room) on May 23, 1945. The Sergeants' Mess was situated in the adjoining house. Bill Ottery was doing his best to eavesdrop beneath the open front room window when Himmler bit the cyanide capsule.

(Himmler had refused to wear the British battledress and trousers offered him when his uniform had been removed at Barnstedt). The prisoner was taken inside and Sergeant Ottery, standing beneath the open front-room window, had only then realised the identity of the prisoner when he heard CSM Austin, who spoke fluent German, address him as Himmler.

A few minutes later, he had almost been knocked down by an officer bounding down the steps shouting for a needle and cotton. Sergeant Ottery ran back next door where, as luck would have it, Ray Weston had just finished sewing on a button. The still-threaded needle, immediately accessible on a bedside cabinet, was rushed to the front room of 31a where a hand took it from Bill Ottery from around the door. Moving back beneath the open window to catch further developments, Bill Ottery then heard the exclamation, 'The bastard's beat us!' The officers had then appeared very shaken, muttering, 'Who's going to do it?' which Bill Ottery presumed meant, who would inform headquarters that their charge had been lost. Colonel Murphy, Major Whittaker and Captain Davies with the other officers had then disappeared in the direction of the Officers Mess and Sergeant Ottery posted the guard he had previously organised.

Early next morning, before anyone was about, the lads of the Defence Company had paid their own visits to view the body still lying on the bare boards of the front room. Soldiers are soldiers everywhere and the removal of the blanket had encouraged ribald remarks such as 'The only German secret weapon not used' etc. Some ATS girl officers had also been afforded the full treatment when they called later in the day!

Sergeant-Major Austin had, with Major Whittaker's approval, 'lifted' Himmler's glasses as a souvenir but when the American and Russian observers appeared with the official photographers, the Major had asked him to replace them for identification purposes. Unfortunately, during the day, the

Captain 'Taffy' Davies, the Orderly Officer on May 23, 1945, pictured with Major Norman Whittaker.

The Cook Sergeant, Charlie Roper, who waited for Himmler to arrive with Bill Ottery outside the house.

Lance-Corporal Cyril Clark who found himself guarding a dead body rather than a live Nazi!

Above: **General Dempsey (seen talking to CSM Austin) inspects the Second Army Defence Company in the park behind No. 31a. Sergeant Weston is at the end of the centre rank.** *Right:* **Two old soldiers relive the past.**

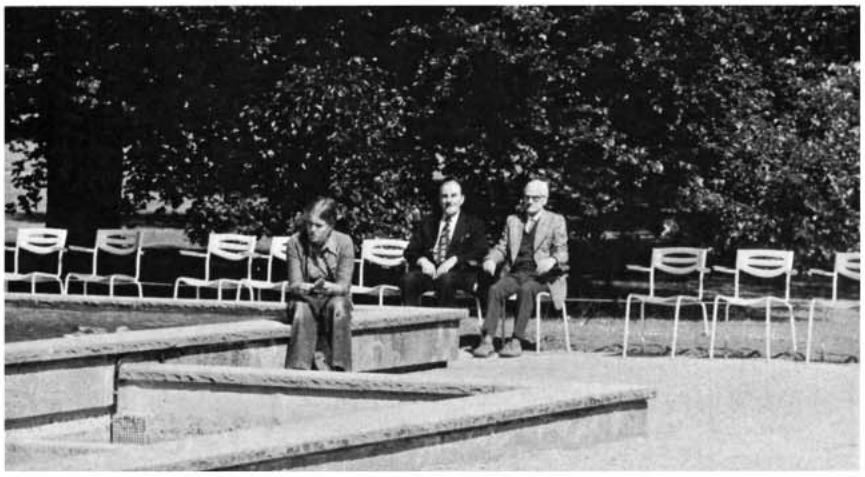
glasses disappeared much to the chagrin of the Sergeant-Major!

As Bill and Ray had played no further part in the comings and goings at 31a, after taking suitable photographs, we moved on to the park where the Defence Company had been camped. Bill Ottery immediately found his bearings although he said the park gates had been replaced with smaller, modern ones. As we walked up to the fountain, he pointed out with a smile where he had once seen a girl with a baby in a pram. 'Something was going on because men kept disappearing with her into those bushes,' he said. 'When I looked in the pram, the baby was lying on a great pile of chocolate and cigarettes!'

Ray Weston pointed out where the Company had paraded for inspection by General Miles Dempsey on his last day as Second Army Commander; Ray said the park was virtually unchanged since the day the parade had taken place.

When we visited the Himmler house in 1976, we had assumed the body had been taken out the front door and then loaded onto the lorry. However, once in the park, our two Sergeants were able to point out that Himmler had been carried out the back where he was loaded onto a 15cwt truck at the rear of what is now the Heiderose Hotel, next to the Sergeants' Mess.

When Major Whittaker had received word from Colonel Murphy on May 25 to bury the body secretly, he had instructed his CSM and Orderly Sergeant to be ready early next morning. Bill Ottery cannot drive so Sergeant Weston was detailed to drive the truck containing the body. On May 26, at about



Above: **If only she knew what was going through their minds — on the same spot where another girl had once stood with her pram!**

The body was loaded on a truck behind the Heiderose Hotel . . .

. . . and driven through the park gates to Uelzener Strasse.

7.00 a.m., whilst the rest of the Company were still at breakfast, Major Whittaker, driving a jeep with CSM Austin at his side, had led the way out of the park and turned right down Uelzener Strasse along past the front of 31a.

We followed the same route and, in spite of extensive changes to the face of Lüneburg since 1945, with the construction of new roads and houses, arrived at the spot where the small convoy had pulled up thirty-two years previously. Bill Ottery and Ray Weston had dug the grave at the foot of a tree in a forest while Major Whittaker and the Sergeant-Major kept a look-out. It had been hot work digging through the tree roots, so Major Whittaker had driven back to the mess for some beer. While he was away, some Polish soldiers had approached the site but had been warned off by the Sergeant-Major declaring that the area was 'Verboten'.

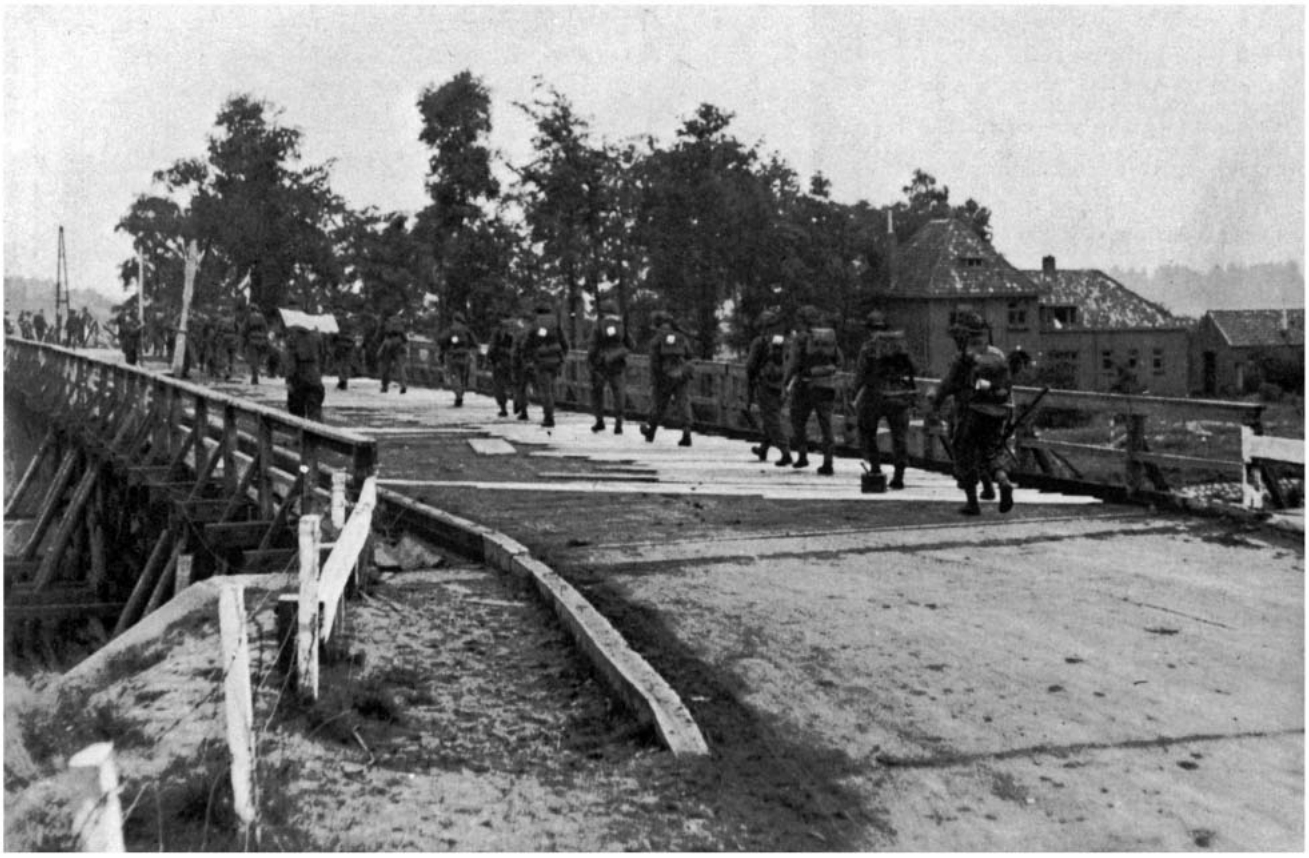
After they had reached a depth of three feet, the Major said this was sufficient and Bill and Ray then went to collect the body from the back of the laced-up truck. It had been wrapped in the grey blanket and rolled up in a camouflage net, the whole bundle tied up with thin wire. Ray had taken the head and Bill the feet and, walking the few yards to the grave, they had thrown the body down. The legs had stuck out but these were unceremoniously pushed into place. The earth was replaced, being stamped down by British Army boots, the excess being scattered around. The whole area had then been tidied up with leaves being brushed over the disturbed earth. Ray Weston had visited the site by motorbike twice over the next few days to ensure that it had not been disturbed. 'At the time,' Ray said, 'we had thought nothing of it. It was just a terrible chore, all that digging when we had better things to do'.

Over the years it annoyed both Bill and Ray when Edwin Austin claimed to have buried Himmler himself. Following the publication of Willi Frischauer's book 'Himmler', an article appeared in the now-defunct *Sunday Dispatch* giving the Sergeant-Major's story. Ray Weston wrote to the editor, without avail, asking him to correct the misleading article, requesting equivalent space to publish the true facts. When Ray saw *After the Battle No. 14* on a bookstall, he thought that the account would be just another incorrect article and was equally disappointed to find that the part he and Bill Ottery had played was apparently left out. When the editor finally got in contact with Ray Weston, he was able to explain the reason for omitting their names — and that in 1976 the Post Office had pronounced Ray as 'Deceased'!

So now we are at the end of the story why, our readers will ask, have we been spoil-sports and not revealed the location of the grave or carried out some spade-drill ourselves in the Lüneburg soil? Basically the answer is another question: What practical purpose would it serve? The man was a monster, perhaps the worst the world has ever known. He denied the right of a recognised grave to so many; why should he be treated any differently? Although Colonel Murphy, who gave the order for the secret burial, is now dead himself, his reasons at the time were sound and it is surely right that a man such as Himmler should be denied any semblance of a Christian burial — which is what might happen if his remains were turned over to the proper authorities. Things are best left as they are so that, in the fullness of time, what little remains now will be erased for good.

'Now just where did we bury him . . . ?' Consulting a map beside the park entrance.

Above: **Our two sergeants visit Victory Hill, just south of Lüneburg, where Field-Marshal Montgomery signed the German surrender on May 4, 1945.**



PRELUDE TO MARKET GARDEN

Bridgehead on the Meuse-Escaut Canal

Top: **Infantry of 231 Brigade, 50 Division, cross the German engineers' bridge, renamed 'Joe's Bridge', at De Groote Barrier over the Meuse-Escaut canal photographed by Sergeant Midgley (IWM).** *Above:* **The new Joe's Bridge, built in 1949-50.**

In September 1944, the Meuse-Escaut canal in Belgium, just two miles short of the Dutch frontier, formed the final water obstacle to be bridged on the N15 road to Eindhoven. A bridgehead across the canal was vital to allow a clear road for the advance northward of XXX Corps and, in particular, the Guards Armoured Division spearheaded by the Irish Guards. It was only fitting, therefore, that the Irish Guards commander himself ensured a successful start to Operation Garden (codename for the ground operation) when he captured the De Groote Barrier bridge intact.

As darkness fell on September 10, 1944, the Irish Guards Group (almost a family affair, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. O. E. Vandeleur of the infantry battalion with the armoured battalion led by a cousin of his, Lieutenant-Colonel G. A. D. Vandeleur) were four miles south of the De Groote Barrier bridge. At a hurried meeting, 'Colonel Joe' announced that, 'I am going to charge the bridge with a troop of tanks' and, turning to Captain R. D. Hutton, troop leader in 615 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers, he said, 'I want you to go with them and make sure the thing's safe.' When Captain Hutton explained that he had no knowledge of the bridge and no men, four weary guardsmen were promptly called over from the side of the road to assist.

'This only gave me four unknown men,' wrote Captain Hutton later, 'with my wireless operator, Davies, my Scots batman, Smith, and the driver of my half-track, an amusing and delightful cockney, Trendall, none of whom had the slightest idea about demolition technique — especially of the German variety. I split my men up into two parties, one of which, under Davies, was to cut all wires and any likely looking things they could find under the near end of the bridge, Smith and his two men were to do the same at the far end, I was to look for and destroy the electric circuit. The bridge, like all canal bridges, was very high and anyone crossing it would be silhouetted against the sky, whilst the approach road sloped steeply, making surprise very difficult.

'The plan was to cover the attack with fire from tanks to the west of a factory situated south-east of the bridge. The infantry were to work up as near as possible to the bridge on either side of the main road, whilst a troop of two tanks was to be concealed just off the road ready to rush the bridge, with the infantry following them. We, the sappers, were to run with the tanks as far as the bridge where our task began.

'The start of the attack was signalled by a Verey light. Almost immediately an 88mm gun guarding the approaches to the bridge was knocked out, and its attendant ammunition truck set on fire. The exploding shells made the attack even more hazardous, while the flames lit the whole area of the bridge, and doubtless added to the confusion of the defenders. Three other 88mm guns were positioned near at hand covering the northern

end of the bridge, supported by infantry with spandaus, who fired almost continuous bursts, whilst, over our heads and to our right, the supporting tanks poured out a curtain of fire.

'On reaching the bridge, a heavy timber trestle affair built by the Germans to replace one destroyed by the Belgian Army in 1940, I discovered that the sides of the road were covered by a confusion of wires, fuses, etc, of every description, easily visible from the light of the burning ammunition truck and the sporadic shellbursts. Having shot through everything I could find with my revolver, as the wire-cutters had by now fallen into the canal, I ran back, causing some consternation amongst the second wave of assaulting infantry, to see how Davies was getting on.

'A towpath ran under the near side of the bridge, and on this I found my three men still cutting detonating fuse. There were twelve ANZ 29 switches hanging from the wall, two forming alternate initiating sets for the complete demolition, and ten running to individual charges on the home abutment and the two nearest trestles. The trestle on the edge of the towpath was set with pier footing charges. It can be imagined what a tangled mass of detonating fuse was found. Also on the towpath were two Germans, one quite dead and the second suffering considerable pain from a severed right leg. Were these part of the firing party? — we never found out, for the second German, who was beyond coherent speech, died the next day.

'Once I had made sure that all the initiating assemblies had been removed from the charges, I climbed on to the bridge, where I met 'Colonel Joe' running across to join the assaulting troops, and, having reported that the bridge was safe and arranged for guards, I returned to my truck, parked thoughtfully by Trendall beside the nearby cafe, for a much needed drink.

'The Irish attack evidently took the enemy completely by surprise, and our tanks and infantry were over the bridge and attacking the enemy positions before the defenders were aware whether the rumbling tanks were their own retreating or ours attacking — they were not left long in doubt! The complete success of the plan and its execution is shown by the fact that the Irish Guards suffered very few casualties.'

The south-bank towpath where Captain Hutton found the two German casualties. The canal is now better known in Belgium as the Maas-Schelde Kanaal.

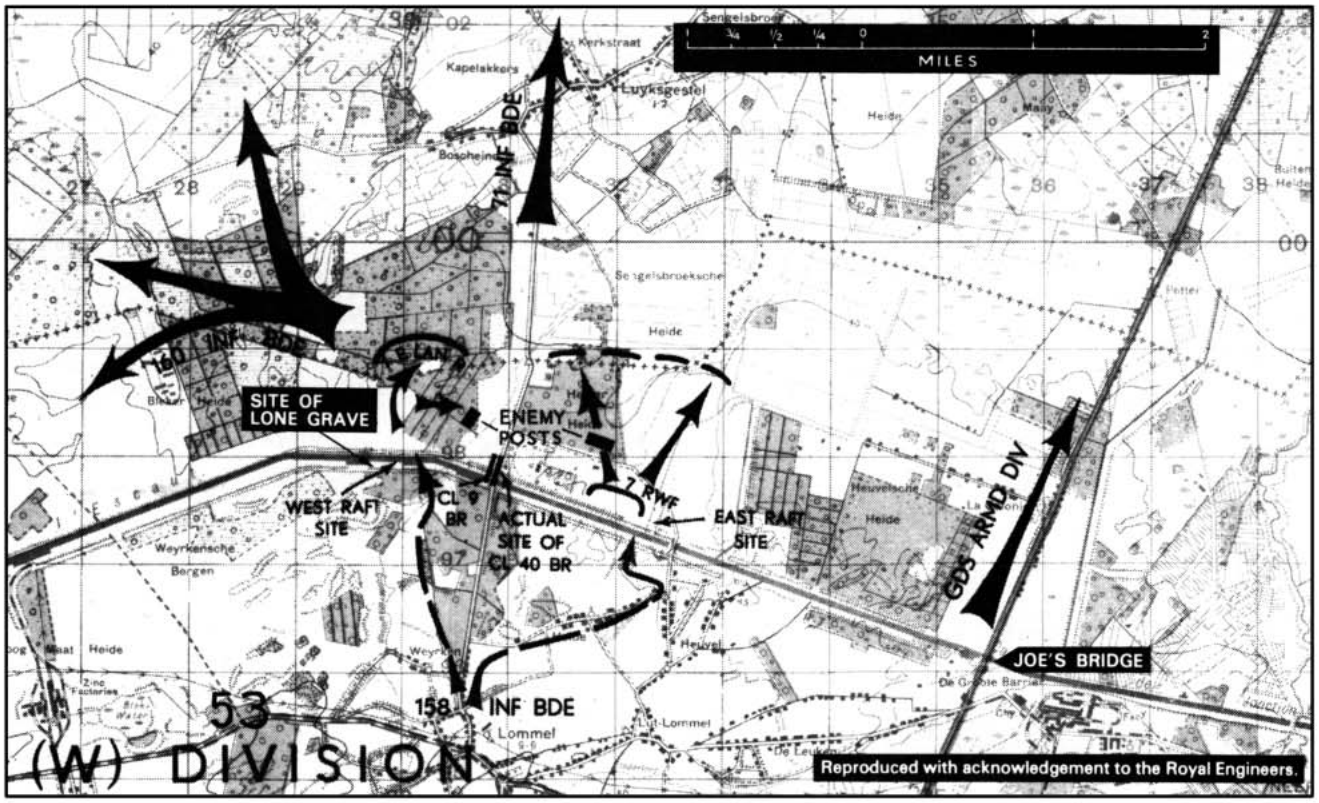
'JOE'S BRIDGE', as it was named the following day, was classified as Class 70, and it took many such loads before being accurately assessed, some time later, to a much lower classification!

Crossing at Lommel

Seven days later, on the night of September 17/18, in order to protect the left flank of 30 Corps, 53rd (W) Division (then part of 12 Corps) carried out an assault crossing of the canal at Lommel a mile or so to the west. As planning for the crossing was taking place, aircraft and gliders for Operation Market streamed overhead. All went well with the assault boat crossings, which began at 11.00 p.m. with the 1st East Lancashire Regiment meeting little opposition and reaching their objective within 90 minutes. On the right, however, the 7th Royal Welsh Fusiliers only managed to establish a bridgehead about 300 yards along the northern canal bank having a depth of 200 yards. Rafting could only begin at the westernmost of the two planned sites at 1.00 a.m. on September 18 as the north bank of the canal at the east raft site had not yet been captured. Even so, fifty-per-cent of the construction party at the Class 5 raft site were casualties. Although still subjected to periodic small-arms fire, the raft was in operation by 5.00 a.m. and was used continuously until a Class 9 bridge had been constructed beside the road from Lommel to Luyksgestel.

'The first equipment vehicles reached the canal at 0345 hrs,' reported Lieutenant-Colonel G. G. S. Clarke, who was Commander Royal Engineers 53 (W) Division at the time, 'when unloading commenced. Considerable work was found to be necessary on the near bank approach ramp as this had to be cut through a robust canal lining of stone in concrete.

'By first light, 0515 hrs, a bulldozer was working on the near bank, half the FBE equipment was ready in the water and the far bank seat had been completed. Shortly afterwards, when the visibility improved, RE parties on both banks came under heavy fire from enemy posts dug in the woods. There



Above: **Sergeant Mapham photographed a carrier about to cross the canal via the Class 5 West Raft site on September 19 (IWM).**

Above: **No chance of crossing the canal at this spot today although a flaking sign** *(below)* **still indicates the approach.**

were several casualties and it became impossible to carry on with work. I arrived at the site at about 0520 hrs and found the sappers engaged with zest in a small-arms contest. I reported the situation to Brigade HQ by telephone, which had by this time been installed near the bridge site. In due course, a company attack was put in from the west, and, at 1030 hrs, a report was received from Brigade HQ that the woods were clear of the enemy and that work could proceed. I ordered a section to move down to the near bank seat, but, immediately they emerged from cover, they came under fire and four men were hit. I withdrew the sappers and again contacted Brigade HQ by telephone, requesting that the woods in square 3098 should be "mopped up", as work could not continue on the class 9 bridge while the enemy still remained in them.

'A spasmodic small-arms battle continued until shortly before 1200 hrs when the Brigade Commander visited the bridge site. He received convincing evidence that enemy parties were in fact holding the woods on the far bank in the proximity of the bridge site.

'A mopping up operation, by one battalion from the west, was arranged and the area was finally cleared by 1330 hrs. Thirty-six Germans were removed from slit trenches and dug-in posts within a radius of 300 yards of the far bank seat. The construction of the bridge then proceeded without further interruptions and it was opened for traffic at 1730 hrs.

The Class 40 bridge

'Every attempt to move westwards to clear the bridgehead for the proposed class 40 bridge at De Maat was strongly resisted by the enemy and, by the evening of September 19, very little progress had been made by 160 Brigade to which this task had been allotted. During the afternoon of September 19, I was visited by Chief Engineer 12 Corps and instructed to investigate the possibility of building a class 40 Bailey bridge on the site of the demolished bridge at 308977 *(see map)*. My report was to be submitted personally to Commander 12 Corps at 0830 hrs on September 20.

'I met the Corps Commander, with my Divisional Commander, as arranged, and reported that bridging at 308977 was possible and that the time required would be in the nature of forty-eight hours continuous working. The necessity for clearing the debris of the demolished bridge before Bailey piers could be built imposed an unknown factor which might cause delay. I was ordered to proceed with the bridge forthwith.

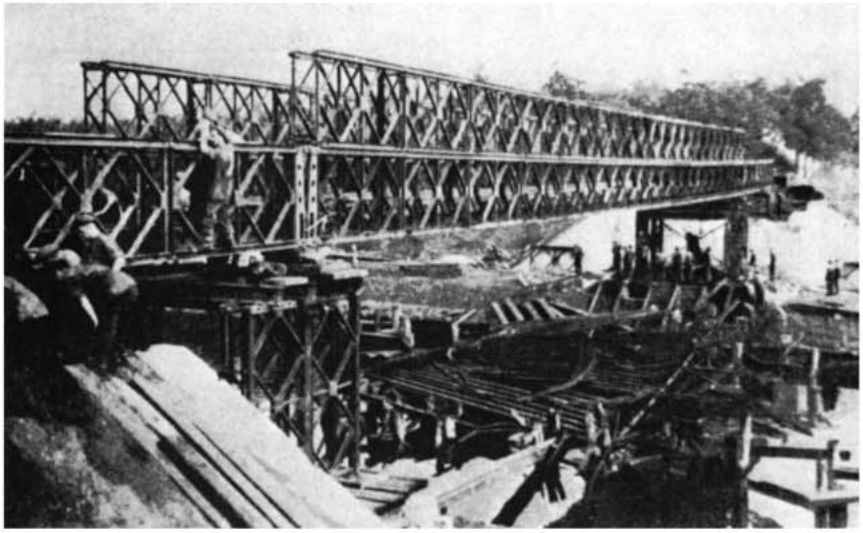
Work commenced at 1145 hrs on September 20 and was completed by 1530 hrs on September 21. Traffic started moving over the bridge at 1540 hrs.

'The bridge consisted of three spans, one central 130ft double double Bailey carried on

two 10ft Bailey crib piers erected on the canal towpaths, and two 20ft double single approach spans between the abutments of the demolished bridge and the Bailey crib piers. The concrete abutments were cut down with compressors while the debris was being cleared, so that the Bailey roadway and existing approach road were on the same level. Six RE platoons were employed, three working alternately, in eight hour shifts. "Artifical moonlight" was provided throughout the hours of darkness by four searchlights placed round the site, each at about half a mile radius from the bridge.'

'Joe's Bridge' at De Groote Barrier, which had been a German timber, trestle construction built by them to replace the one blown by the Belgian army in the 1940 retreat, was removed in the late 1940s to be replaced by a bowstring, girder bridge.

Left: **The Class 9 folding-boat bridge beside the Lommel-Luyksgestel road bridge demolished by the Germans, photographed by Sergeant Watkins on September 20 (IWM).** *Above:* **A few rusting anchor cables from the bridge still remain at the edge of the canal today.**



Left: **The Class 40 Bailey bridge under construction.** *Above:* **Sadly, only the bridge abutments can be seen today.**

When we first visited the Meuse-Escaut canal assault area in April 1974 we were thrilled to find the Class 40 Bailey bridge at De Maat still standing although it was no longer in use as a modern bridge had just been completed alongside. Although the light was fading, we took some photographs (see back cover) and it was lucky we did so; when we revisited the site in April 1977, the Bailey bridge was no longer there having been dismantled by the Belgian army only three months previously. We felt it was a great shame to remove this historic bridge, which had successfully withstood over thirty years' traffic, and would have thought it could have been left intact beside the modern replacement. Now all one can see are the concrete bridge abutments built by 282 Field Company RE.

In the forest on the north bank, many of the old German slit trenches can still be seen although a metal-detector search did not reveal anything of interest. However we did find something unique a few hundred yards along the southern bank of the canal; something that we have never come across before in our research for After the Battle. This was a headstone marking the site of a field grave of a British soldier who died during the assault and was buried by the canal to be later exhumed in 1946. Looking out onto the peaceful canal today, busy with barge traffic, it is a poignant reminder to the assault crossings which were the prelude to Operation Market Garden.

Above: **Although we found nothing of interest in the German foxholes near the canal, the site of a British grave,** *right,* **still remains beside the south bank towpath.**

The making of A Bridge Too Far

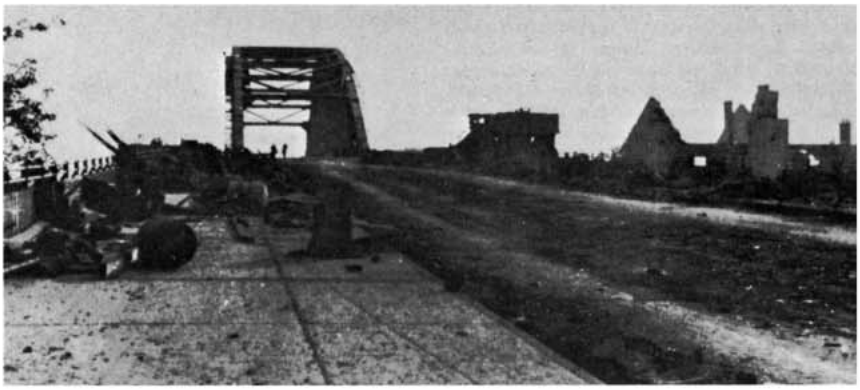
BY COLONEL JOHN WADDY
Joint Military Advisor (British)

Above: **THE FILM. Deventer bridge littered with Charles Mann's vehicles. From L-R: replica Hanomag, Leopard masquerading as a Panther IV, Krauss-Maffei half-track, 6-wheel armoured car, 4-wheel armoured car, genuine Kubelwagen, 6-wheel armoured car with a 4-wheel armoured car behind.**

September 1944 — the month when the five long years of blood, toil, sweat and tears at last seemed about to end. The German armies in western Europe were in almost total collapse and were scurrying back to the burning remains of the Third Reich: only the coup de grâce needed to be given — a swift stroke to the heart. Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery saw this at once and pressed for a maximum effort to allow a combined British and American Army to sweep round the German right flank in Holland and pour into the north German plain, around the Ruhr and on, possibly, to Berlin.

It was a bold plan and one which, if it had succeeded, could have finished the war by Christmas. Unfortunately it did not succeed and the final eight months fighting were some of the bloodiest of the war with death for millions on the battlefield and among Hitler's prisoners and, worst of all, it brought the Russians to the centre of Europe. There were many reasons for failure among which political factors rank foremost, but bad generalship, bad weather and bad luck were all equally to blame.

We all know General Eisenhower's fateful decision not to give Montgomery the priority that he requested; instead, only the newly formed Allied Airborne Army was allocated to help him open the door into Germany. At the time the plan was conceived, success was possible even without the full force requested by Montgomery but the swiftness and the efficiency of the German Army reorganisation



Above: **A German photograph of Arnhem bridge as it really was after being cleared of the wreckage from the Gräbner attack (IWM).** *Below:* **The bridge today.**

on the threshold of their Fatherland was another and equally telling reason for the final failure of the operation.

Operation Market Garden was the codename given to the combined land and air operation to drive an armoured thrust right through Holland from the Belgian border to the frontiers of Germany beyond Arnhem. MARKET was the airborne part; the capture of the river and canal bridges from Eindhoven to Arnhem by 1st Airborne Corps under Lieutenant-General Sir F. A. M. Browning — 'the airborne carpet' — as Montgomery termed it, to pave the way for OPERATION GARDEN — the advance of the Second British Army with XXX Corps, including the famed Guards Armoured Division, on the centre axis flanked by 8 and 12 Corps.

The three Airborne Divisions (1st British and the 82nd and 101st American) had seven days to plan and prepare for the largest single airborne operation which was to be carried out on September 17. Nine days later, the 2,000 survivors of the British Division withdrew across the Rhine and the leading elements of XXX Corps fell back from the river, within sight of their final goal — the bridge at Arnhem but without its capture the operation had failed.

Thirty-two years later, after more than a year's planning and preparation, another unit moved across to Holland to make a film about those events for which so many men had set out in such high hopes in 1944. This time the operation lasted six months and ended, it is hoped, in success.

Almost before Cornelius Ryan had finished his last book 'A Bridge Too Far', a task which, interspersed with two serious illnesses, took him seven years, Joseph E. Levine, the well-known American producer with 500 films to his credit had started negotiations to buy the film rights of the book. Many books have been written on this operation, and in particular the part played by the British Airborne Division at Arnhem, but Ryan used a wider canvas to give the whole picture from both sides with the developments which led up to the whole operation. Whilst his account of the battle does not add much to the record due most to his journalistic approach it did, on the other hand, give an excellent account of the strategic picture from all sides both within the Allied Command and especially from that of the Germans. It was very sad that, shortly after publication, Cornelius Ryan died of cancer which he had fought so bravely during the research and writing of the book. If he had lived he would undoubtedly have been a strong influence behind the scenes in the making of the film especially as regards the integrity of the story in the script.

Joe Levine wanted the film to be his biggest picture ever with a huge budget of £15 million, and he soon persuaded Sir Richard Attenborough to be the director. Using his own company, Richard Attenborough Productions Ltd., he virtually ran the whole production, although, officially the film was made under the title of Joe E. Levine Presents Inc. (A Bridge Too Far is also the first film in which *After the Battle* magazine has been consulted at an early stage with a meeting in August 1975 with the Associate Producer John Palmer and his staff. The editor was able to advise on the current availability of restored military vehicles resulting in the subsequent appointment of Charlie Mann and his Falmouth team to provide and maintain most of the 100 plus vehicles used in the film. *After the Battle* also advised that Mr. Jan Voskuil, the leading authority on the Arnhem battle with his own extensive archive, should be appointed historical adviser to the film. Ed.)

It was decided that the whole film would be made in the Netherlands for the prime reason of bringing authenticity to the film and, during 1975, Richard Attenborough and some of his staff carried out wide reconnaissances in Holland in order to find, first and foremost, a bridge to represent that 'Bridge Too Far'. It was not possible to use Arnhem bridge itself because there is so much new construction on both sides replacing the utter devastation caused during the battle; furthermore, Arnhem is such an important traffic junction through Holland that it would not have been practicable to close the bridge for even one hour without causing traffic jams half-way across Holland.

After a thorough search, the choice fell upon the little town of Deventer, 35 kms north of Arnhem. There, the bridge over the River IJssel was ideal — it was almost the right length and width and the construction was very similar including the cycle tracks on either side; furthermore, except for one block of flats, there were no new buildings around each end and the surrounding area looked almost as if time had stood still since 1944. A large car park around the bridge ramp was also ideally situated for the building of the

Above: **The breakout as it really was, photographed by Sergeant Jones. The Irish Guards pass the Belgian/Dutch frontier on the N15 after crossing Joe's Bridge (IWM).** *Below:* **The only danger today is from the customs officials!**

Below: **THE FILM. XXX Corps 'breakout' along two miles of Dutch Army tank training ground at Amersfoort — much to the annoyance of the new tank trainees! (Photo by Alan Tomkins, Joint Art Director).**

The advance in 1944. *Above:* Soldiers of the 1/5 Welch Infantry Regiment, 53 Division, photographed by Sergeant Watkins on September 20 passing the St. Bernardus dairy in Bergeyk (IWM).

Above: The windmill was demolished in 1950 and the whole complex, including the mill now belongs to Zuid Nederlandse Melkindustrie B.V.

Left and above: British armour presses on through the main square of Valkenswaard (on the N15), photographed by Sergeant Midgley on September 18 (IWM).

Left and above: A Sherman of the 11th Armoured Division photographed in Leende by Sergeant Jones on September 22 (IWM).

Left: Armour presses on through Veghel, en route to Nijmegan. *Above:* Today, the original lettering is still just visible on the wall of the Hotel Tilesen.

Left and above: On September 24, an 11th Armoured Division column entered Deurne, west of Helmond. There, on the 25th, Sergeant Jones photographed Shermans halted in Martinet Straat in the shadows of St. Willibrorduskerk (IWM).

THE FILM. Lieut.-Col. 'Joe' Vandeleur (Michael Caine) and Lieut.-Gen. Brian Horrocks (Edward Fox) inspect the Irish Guards.

Above: As tanks of the 29th Armoured Brigade, 11th Armoured Division, arrived in Helmond, citizens were photographed leaving the town by Sergeant Lawson on September 22, 1944 (IWM). *Right:* Mierloseweg, Helmond, photographed in April 1977.

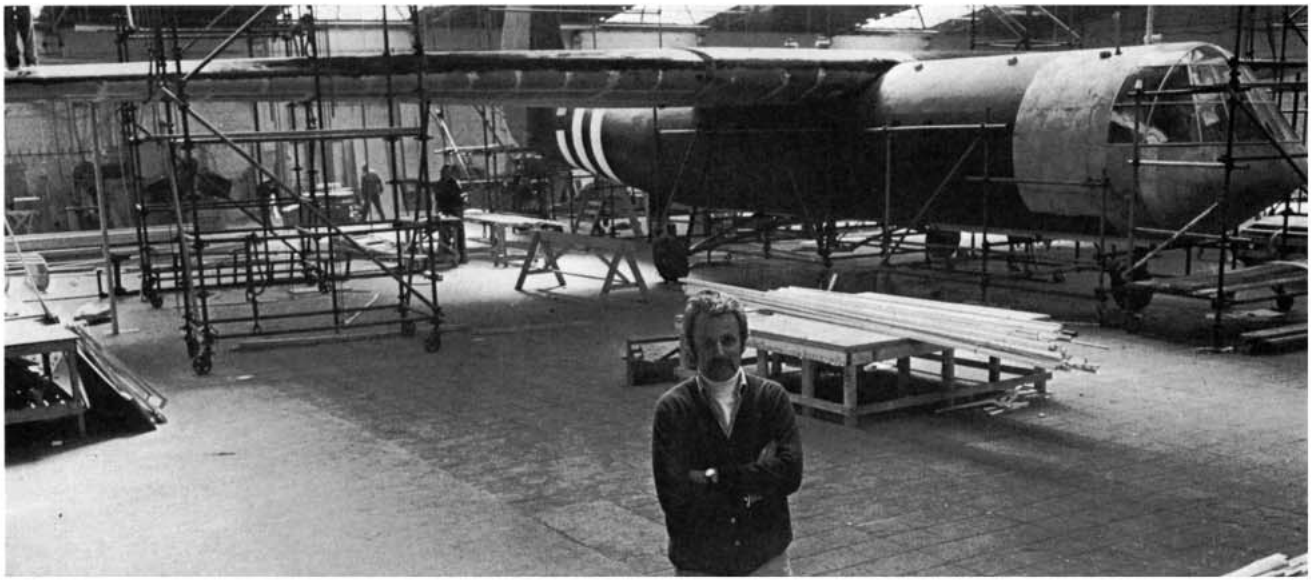
eight houses needed to represent those in Arnhem in which Lieutenant-Colonel Frost's battalion held out for four days. Deventer — a delightful old fashioned walled town — was perfect in other respects for the making of the film and it became the headquarters and main base of the company during its long stint on location, being nicknamed the film city of Holland. Deventer had fallen prey to the current economic situation and many of the light industries, which had been introduced to the area after the war, had been closed down giving ample empty factory space to house the props departments.

Late in 1975, the advance party of 'the unit', as it came to be known, moved over to Deventer to establish the base and, in particular, to start building the many props, the biggest of which were the houses around the bridge and the gliders, tanks and guns. Factories and offices were taken over under the control of Terence Marsh, the Production Designer, and his large team of artists, draughtsmen, carpenters and plasterers (with an appropriate logistic staff) started work. Terry Marsh also spent many days driving round the countryside to find suitable locations for the various scenes — German HQs, the site for Oosterbeek church (to be built as a set), river crossing areas, dike roads, houses to represent HQs in England and so on. This was a long task in itself but even more difficult were the negotiations needed to hire the locations and where necessary obtain permission for areas, roads and even rivers to be closed for periods lasting a few hours to

Above left: **The Irish Guards advance north through Eindhoven bedecked with Dutch national flags. Picture by Sergeant Midgley on September 19 (IWM).** *Above right:* **The same view of Stratumseind, thirty-three years later, from the balcony of the Phoenix Cafe — now sporting the Stars and Stripes!** *Below:* **THE FILM. The Brink, or square, of Deventer, doubling as Eindhoven, with 1,200 Dutch extras playing both an enthusiastic crowd and also Irish Guardsmen!**

Stratumseind runs into Rechte Straat where Captain Malendine photographed these Dutch nurses waving a greeting (IWM).

No driving up Rechte Straat today which has now been converted into a pedestrian shopping precinct.

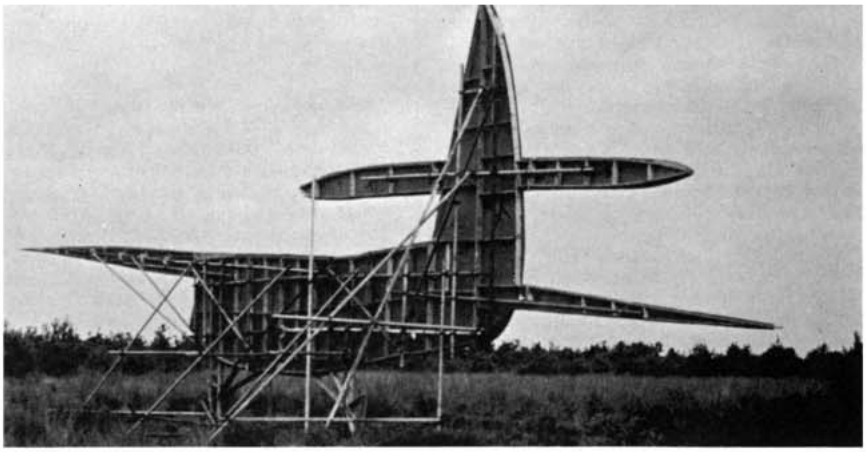


several weeks. Deventer Bridge was taken over for two weeks to film the battle on the bridge, which included blowing up armoured vehicles, an ammunition dump and even burning the superstructure. Deventer car park was rented for more than five months at a cost of £70,000. On several occasions Nijmegan Bridge, one of the largest in Europe, was taken over for periods of a few hours which included stopping the never-ending river traffic on the Waal.

Also during 1975 the script was being written by William Goldman of New York and, as everyone knows, this is the foundation on which the whole film depends. Just as the book was based on the actual operation, the script used the book as a basis. On the whole, it is fairly accurate but obviously, for various reasons connected with the world of films, some liberties have been taken with history. Some of these are minor and excusable such as amalgamating several characters and a number of incidents into one individual or one action but there are other occasions in which incidents have been enlarged or altered merely to give a specific actor a better part in keeping with his image. It must be remembered, however, that the film does not set out to be a documentary — it is a dramatic portrayal of an event in history. Before the script was finalised, the director talked to a number of the leading personalities who took part in the battle and, after these discussions, some alterations were made.

Soon after the Unit Advance Party started their work the main construction force of about 70 carpenters, painters, riggers and plasterers moved into the empty factories of Deventer to start building the indoor sets, including a Dakota and a Horsa glider for interior shots. The three biggest tasks were to

Top: **Scriptwriter William Goldman in one of the Deventer factories making the six Horsa gliders.** *Above:* **One of the gliders dispersed on the dropping zone . . . or is it?** *Below:* **The truth!** *Bottom:* **Ready for filming at Deelen airbase.**



build the eight houses on the Deventer car park by the bridge, a country house and church representing Oosterbeek in Bronkhorst village, some 20 kms south of Deventer, and six, full-size Horsa gliders. Other jobs included refacing a burnt-out country house in a park outside the town to represent the Hartenstein Hotel, HQ of British Airborne Division; fabrication of plastic mouldings of Sherman tanks to be mounted on long wheelbase Land-Rover chassis'; German guns and sentry boxes; a large water tank for river crossing close-ups by the River IJssel ten miles downstream and a Dutch canal bridge.

Meanwhile, Major John Larminie, the tank specialist, was scouring Europe for running Shermans, spare parts and engines all of which had to be brought to Deventer for repair and refurbishing. In the end, Major Larminie tracked down nine useable Shermans. The Dutch Army provided a 105mm Howitzer version, which was suitably transformed into a Firefly, and a 'Dozer Sherman, minus turret, which appears in the film with the addition of a plastic turret. In addition, the Dutch provided two towable hulks.

Of the five Shermans obtained from Belgian sources, two 'gate guardians' (one Firefly and one 105mm) came from the Ecôle de Troupes Blindées at Arlon and another Firefly from a cabbage patch behind the Royal Army Museum in Brussels. The other two were more modern 76mm versions. All the XXX Corps armour, real and plastic, was crewed for the filming by army personnel on leave from Bovington and the Rhine Army.

The majority of other vehicles were provided by Charlie Mann and his Military Vehicle Museum, the 1939/45 Group and Bapty and Co., and a British Rail ferry was chartered to transport the vehicles from Falmouth to Holland. A workshop was set up in the nearby village of Twello, where these vehicles and the Shermans were maintained, painted with the correct colours and insignia and also repaired; the latter being a major task bearing in mind the many miles travelling to and from distant locations as well as their participation in a number of fierce 'actions'.

The wardrobe unit was also situated at Twello in another empty factory and across its extensive floors stretched rack upon rack of uniforms — battledresses with the ranks and insignias of the units of XXX Corps, airborne smocks, US Airborne combat jackets, boots and of course German Army, SS and Luftwaffe uniforms together with helmets, sets of equipment, camouflage material and even 1944 civilian clothes — a mammoth quartermaster's store. Tony Mendelson, Wardrobe Master (and better known as a designer of mediaeval costumes) took immense pains to ensure absolute accuracy in the uniforms of the principal actors — correct badges of ranks, medal ribbons, type of materials and personal idiosyncracies. For example, General 'Boy' Browning designed his own RFC-style jacket which is now in the Airborne Museum at Aldershot and this was borrowed and copied exactly to Dirk Bogarde's measurements.

The Wardrobe area had to be large not only to house this clothing store but also to cater for the reception, fitting and feeding of hundreds of extras. For some of the scenes, such as the German retreat, their reinforcement of Nijmegen and the scenes on the landing and dropping zones, over 500 extras at a time were used. This entailed their arrival at Twello before midnight followed by fitting and kitting out with feeding and transport to locations often 40-50 miles distant. Filming would proceed until late evening and then the weary extras would start the reverse process although with the additional and welcome pay parade at the end. The majority of the extras were Dutch youths with a leavening of older men most of whom had served or were already serving in the Dutch Armed Forces.

Colonel John Waddy, Joint Military Advisor and author for our story, (who parachuted into DZ Y on Ginkelsche Heide on September 18, 1944) pictured with Charlie Mann.

THE VEHICLES USED

Compiled by Charlie Mann, Military Vehicle Museum Ltd., Lamanva, Nr. Falmouth, Cornwall

American scenes: Twenty Jeeps (repainted for British scenes when required), 6 Jeep trailers, an Airborne trailer, 2 Para cart/trailers, 3 Jeeps (expendable), a Dodge Command car, 3 Dodge weapon carriers, Dodge Ambulance, 2 GMC 6x6s, Chevrolet 1½-tonner, Dodge Recovery Vehicle, Diamond T wrecker, Clark airfield tractor, Plymouth Sedan staff car and 2 Harley Davidson motor cycles.

British Scenes: Five Bren Gun carriers, T16 carrier, 7 International half-tracks, White Scout car, 2 Humber armoured cars, Daimler armoured car, 4 Daimler Scout cars, 2 Scammell heavy recovery vehicles, Ford WOT 6 3-tonner, Bedford QL Trooper, 2 Bedford QL GS Trucks, Bedford QL (expendable), Bedford MWD Infantry Truck, Morris 15cwt CS 8, Austin K2 Civil Defence Vehicle, 2 Austin K2 ambulances, Bedford OYC Bowser, Dodge D15 water tanker, Chevrolet C 8 A/1C5, Humber heavy utility, Bedford OY NAAFI tea-van body, Humber staff car, 3 BSA M20 motor cycles, 2 Royal Enfield 350 m/cs, Matchless m/c, and one Welbike (Brockhouse) m/c. Artillery and armour: A Battery of 25pdrs, 3 6pdr anti-tank guns, 2 Bofors AA guns, 8 M4 Sherman tanks, an M4 Sherman Dozer, 5 Replica Sherman tanks and several tank hulks — ex ranges

German Scenes: Horsch staff car, 2 Mercedes staff cars, Citroen staff car, 2 Schwimmwagens, 4 Kubelwagens, 5 Volkswagen/Kubel replicas, a Kettenkraftrad, 3 BMW motor cycle combinations, Zundapp m/c combination, BMW solo m/c, 2 Zundapp m/cs, Krauss-Maffei half-track, Demag half-track, Hanomag replica, Hanomag (expendable), Hotchkiss Brandt/Marder 2, 2 replica 6-wheel armoured cars, 2 replica 4-wheel armoured cars, Bussing-NAG 5-ton truck, German Ford 3-ton truck, Auto Union personnel carrier, Opel Blitz 1-ton ambulance. Artillery and armour: PAK 35 anti-tank gun, PAK 50 anti-tank gun, 2 80mm field-guns, 3 80mm guns (replica), Nebelwerfer rocket-launcher, 4 Leopard tanks modified to Panther IVs, 4 AMX self-propelled guns—modified to look German. To supplement the vehicles listed in the German retreat scenes, a number of old buses, trucks, carts, etc, were obtained from collectors in Holland.

Ralph Berryman's original airborne jeep being used by Major-General Maxwell Taylor (Paul Maxwell), Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division.

The issuing and collection of weapons was also a long procedure as the Dutch Police rightly took the security of arms very seriously and, if organisation had been lax, a considerable number of weapons could have disappeared and ended up in the wrong hands. Bapty & Co., the well-known arms providers for the film world, produced a huge furniture van-cum-armoury and workshop to provide all the weapons required from .38 pistols, rifles, carbines to 3-in. mortars, bazookas and Vickers machine guns. Most of these were fully-working models, able to fire blank ammunition, but there were also dummies, which could be used by background extras.

This mobile armoury, under the expert eye of Bill Aylmore (ex-50th Regiment), moved around Holland with a strong police escort, which kept an eye on the issue and collection of all weapons. Each weapon was signed out on a proper form giving the serial number. It was due to Bill Aylmore's hard work and Army training that not one weapon was lost; remarkable under the circumstances when it was quite usual for some 500 weapons, some with ammunition, to be issued, often in the dark, and then received back late in the evening when everyone was tired, irritable and eager to get home.

Sgt. Bill Aylmore also excelled himself during the filming of the battle on the bridge by being the ace shot with the PIAT. During all the various takes he was able to put the bomb exactly where the director wanted it and where it coincided with the special effects explosion.

The Special Effects team, under Johnny Richardson, were also making their preparations including bringing over the various ingredients for the explosions, bullet hits and fires. Deventer bridge had to be fitted with gas pipes running along the girders to simulate the paintwork burning after the explosion of the ammunition dump on the bridge and guns had to be modified so that they gave the appearance of firing; for example, a German 50mm anti-tank gun could fire a blank round and, using air pressure from a gas cylinder, the mechanism was made to recoil and eject the spent case.

Also during this preparatory stage, two other important matters were being planned — the production schedule and the casting of actors for the parts, each depending upon the other. The actors were selected and contracted for differing periods of time with the result that the particular actors' scenes had to be filmed irrespective of their sequence in the film. This led to the apparent anomaly of filming scenes depicting the end of the battle before it had even started, although, by and large, the sequence was in order. In many cases it had to be because there was no point in building scenery and wrecking it to produce battle damage effect only to rebuild it to show it in its proper state before the battle began. The only occasion when this had to be done was on the British glider zones, when the six brand-new gliders had to be taken out to the heathland location and dispersed in their landing positions with their tails dropped off to allow the unloading to take place. Afterwards, the gliders had to be transported on low-loaders to the Dutch airbase at Deelen, north of Arnhem, to be assembled and lined up for the loading and take-off scenes in England. It was a mammoth task to co-ordinate the production schedule combining the actors' programmes with the already complicated jig-saw of fitting in the scenes with the hiring of the location areas — houses, woods, heaths or town streets and squares, together with the availability, in many cases, of the equipment — tanks, aircraft, vehicles, boats, etc.

A large number of well-known film stars were chosen to play the parts of the prominent men and one woman. Naturally it adds to the box-office draw to include well-known actors but it also assists the audience to recognise the wide cast of characters as they appear during the action. Sean Connery portrays Major-General Urquhart in almost the star role as his personality is the strongest of all the main characters and he is in the film from beginning to end. Other major parts are played by Anthony Hopkins as Lieutenant-Colonel John Frost; Edward Fox as Lieutenant-General Brian Horrocks; Dirk Bogarde as Lieutenant-General 'Boy' Browning; Ryan O'Neal as Brigadier-General Jim Gavin; Robert Redford

Above: **THE FILM. David Anker, a member of APA, portrays Corporal Taffy Brace of the RAMC, who played a prominent part in the battle at the Hartenstein Hotel. Picture taken outside the armoury van with ex-Corporal Andy Millborne in the position he was in when hit when he lost both hands and an eye. He visited the filming with the real Taffy Brace, who had helped him in 1944 when he was injured.**

Above: **Real Bren Gunners at the ready beside No. 169 Mierloseweg, the Raaymakers Houthandel, in Helmond.** *Below:* **We found that the same corner is now used for Dutch doggies delight and relief!**

Left: **Major-General Maxwell Taylor, boards his aircraft at Welford airfield for his parachute drop north-west of Son with the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment (US Army).** *Above:* **THE FILM. Sir Richard Attenborough specifically matched up this shot of Paul Maxwell, 'keeping that Eagle Screaming', at Deelen Airfield.**

as Major Julian Cook; Gene Hackman as Major-General Stanislaw Sosabowski; Elliott Gould as Colonel Bobby Stout; Michael Caine as Lieutenant-Colonel 'Joe' Vandeleur; James Caan as Staff-Sergeant Eddie Dohun; Maximilian Schell as General der Infanterie Wilhelm Bittrich; Hardy Kruger as an amalgamated SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen SS Ludwig; Laurence Olivier as an imaginary Dutch doctor, representing all that gallant band who helped the British Division and Liv Ullman as Mrs. Kate ter Horst, the almost-mythical heroine, whose house became a hospital in the forefront of the battle. Except for the last two, all the other actors, including a Dutch resistance man and his son, speak their own language with the appropriate sub-titles, and this adds more realism to the story.

A host of other actors play lesser speaking parts of all four nations and some represent actual characters, such as Corporal Taffy Brace RAMC, Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, while others are imaginary officers and NCOs. To play the part of Frost's men at the bridge Richard Attenborough carried out an interesting and successful experiment: he selected some 50 young actors to become these men of the airborne force. For union reasons it was not possible to use serving soldiers and, furthermore, although they would be better soldiers, they might not be able to act or speak as such in front of the cameras. Extras could have been used but both their soldierly and acting ability would have been marginal, so it was decided it would be easier to turn actors into the semblance of soldiers rather than the reverse. Some 300 were interviewed and 50 finally selected and many could say that they almost became the stars of the film. Their high value soon became apparent and their stay was prolonged as, in turn, they became American and German soldiers taking part in a variety of different actions and on some occasions, they were used as Section Commanders in charge of groups of Dutch extras in crowd scenes.

The original intention was to have them trained at the Parachute Regiment Depot for a week to give them a grounding in weapon handling, battle tactics and physical fitness.

The actors meet the real stars. *Above:* **Sean Connery with Major-General Roy Urquhart and** *(below)* **Anthony Hopkins and Lieutenant-Colonel (later Major-General) John Frost.**

However, this did not materialise and they arrived at Deventer with the appearance of all recruits, although, the few ex-soldiers and marines could at once be spotted by their soldierly bearing. As the British Military Adviser, I was understandably shocked at seeing this bunch of actors portraying men of my own Regiment. However, with the help of the ex-soldier actors and other ex-Servicemen in the unit, they soon started to look and act the part and much of the credit for this must go to the actors themselves who soon became known as the APA — Attenborough's Private Army. Their morale and standard of performance were an example to the whole unit and they lived almost as soldiers in an old building previously occupied by the old folk of the town. Nevertheless, it was still necessary to use serving soldiers in scenes where special skills were required and service personnel from five different countries took part. The largest contingent of 350 men came from the 1st Battalion. The Parachute Regiment who took part in the scenes depicting the parachute landings of the British, American and Polish troops. Some 30 RAF Officers and men were responsible for aircrew training and safety and for the paratroop training and despatch. There was also a small supply drop section of the RCT and 50 Belgian Para Commandos did two descents in a day for an 82nd Airborne drop.

Eight of the C47 Dakota aircraft were on hire from the Danish and Finnish Air Forces complete with crews. The Dutch Army, being largely a conscript force, were reluctant to allow their troops to be used, particularly in scenes where they would be plainly visible, and this was not on account of their ultra-long hair! However, the Dutch did provide both the tanks and crews to represent German and British armour on several occasions and Leopard and AMX tanks took the part of German Panthers and SP guns in the battles around Arnhem bridge and in Nijmegen. They underwent some changes to the outline with foliage added as extra camouflage but naturally they will be obvious to anyone trained in tank recognition. On one occasion, a squadron of each was used in the background to give weight to the appearance of XXX Corps armour awaiting the order to break out across the Belgian/Dutch border. Also an Engineer Squadron of the Royal Netherlands Army was used to help build a Bailey bridge over a canal but, unfortunately, due to hair-cutting problems, only a few actually appear in the film and these were the officers, WOs and NCOs. The ubiquitous APA and some of the more experienced extras quickly took their place to become instant sappers for the night.

If it is true that an army marches on its stomach, then it applies equally to a film unit. The feeding of all the people involved was another major task as on any day there might be up to 1,200 men and women to be catered for in some five or six different locations. The standard of messing run by Phil Hobbs was excellent throughout the six month period and contributed a lot to the unit's high morale and ability to work hard. For night filming a continuous hot buffet kept everyone well fed. On a number of nights there were several hundred actors, extras and stunt men soaked to the skin during filming of such scenes as the Polish attempt to cross the river and the final withdrawal of the British Airborne over the Rhine in pouring rain, all being revived periodically during the night by the catering unit with liberal tots of whisky and brandy.

The other essential logistic requirement — transport — was also extensive and efficient and each department, cameras, lighting, props, special effects and armoury all had their own vans and could be seen heading out in long convoys each morning to locations out in the country. Other cars and light vans were hired for other departments and individuals. A local taxi firm was virtually taken over for use mainly on the run to Amsterdam fetching and carrying actors to and from the airport. A regular fast run was also set up to rush each day's film to the airport to be flown to the studios near London for processing. This film or rushes would then be collected the following day to be viewed in the makeshift theatre in the evening. It was said that this taxi firm made itself a fortune. Indeed, in addition to the direct amount paid to Deventer and other persons for hire or rent of locations and facilities (such as fire appliances, police and ambulance services), there was a huge boost to the local economy from the living expenses of the unit members. Accommodation was provided by the company in and around Deventer and varied from hotels, motels, hostels, lodging rooms, suburban houses and caravan parks. All in all it was reckoned that some £8 million was injected into the local economy. Bearing in mind the long hot summer, public houses and restaurants in the area did a roaring trade, particularly in the sale of cold beer and many bars were quickly persuaded to obtain pint tankards in place of the usual Continental, toothmug-size glasses.

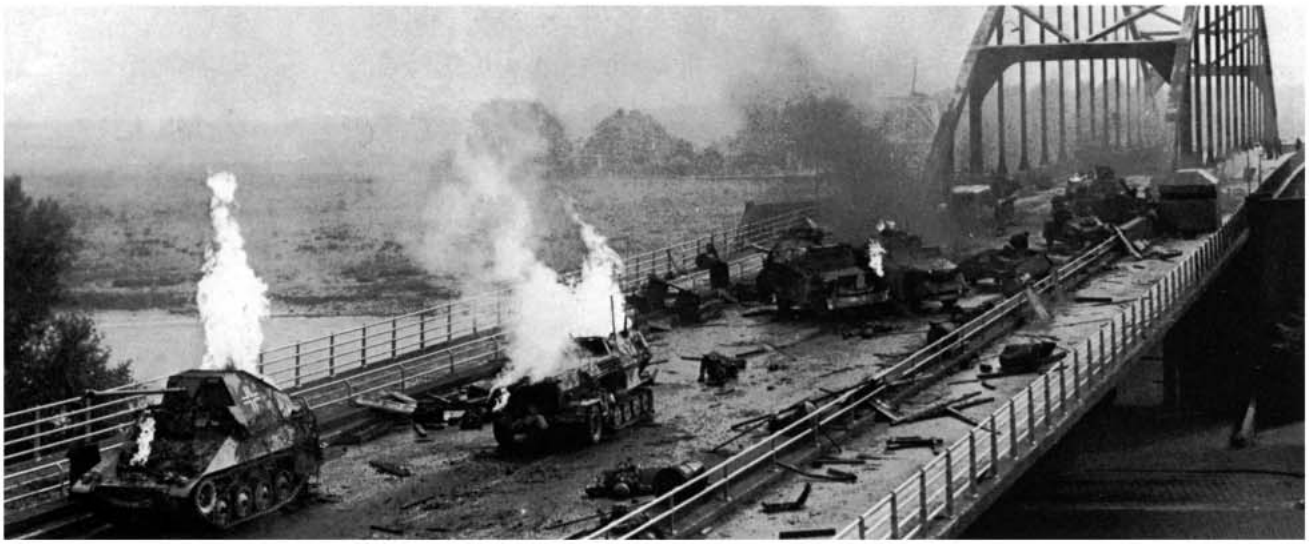
By mid-April most of the planning and preparation had been finished and the majority of the construction work was completed or well in hand and the second Operation Market Garden was ready to start: D-Day was to be Monday, April 26 and during that weekend the remainder of the main body flew over to Holland.

Monday was a bright clear spring morning and, as the sun rose, the back streets of old Deventer began to fill with disorganized German troops, civilians in old clothing of the war period, trucks, vans, lights, cables and, shortly after nine o-clock, the first orders were given for 'Action'. The longest and most intensive period of 'on location' filming had started and this was not to end until mid-October, including most Saturdays and often some Sundays too.

The Unit was organized for its work in a similar manner to Army units. Periodic schedules were issued, weekly schedules and then daily orders or 'The Unit Call' as it was termed, which was issued during the late afternoon for the next day's 'shooting'.

The locations used were many and varied. Deventer of course, was the main area, not only for the Unit HQ but also for the interior studio shots and other outside locations. Deventer bridge underwent two periods of closure to allow filming of the bridge battle scenes. During the first period in May, the bridge was littered for over a week with rubble, burnt timber and wrecked German vehicles and throughout the day black oily smoke from burning tyres drifted over the actors and crew; unfortunately this smoke also covered half of the town and marred the usually immaculate Dutch houses. The inhabitants soon became used to the sounds of battle in their midst and for a time Deventer attracted many visitors from all over the country who came to watch the activity, although 'activity' is not always an accurate description of a film company's work to the

Above: **The APA, soon after it arrived, doing some real training at a holiday camp outside Deventer to try to make them look like soldiers.** *Below:* **The 'Commanding General', Sir Richard Attenborough, reviews his troops.**

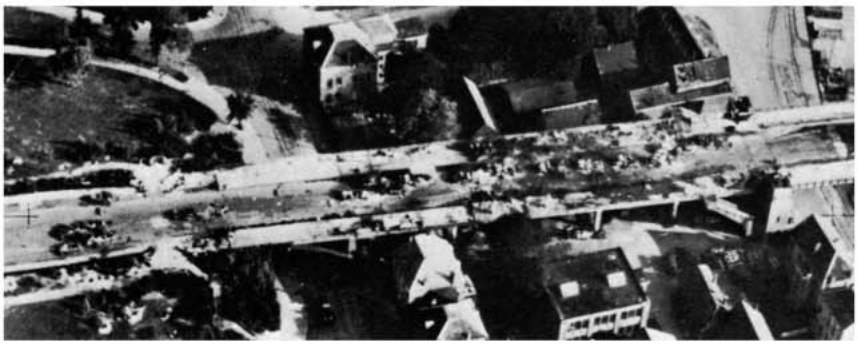


outsider. Many hours are spent in setting up the scenery or even breaking it up, in laying the demolition charges, installing the lighting and cameras — overhead, on the road, in the vehicles or through windows. Then, as in war, there are short moments of intense action with explosions, firing, smoke and flames and hand-to-hand fighting to be quickly terminated by the curt order, 'Cut!'. The actors then go back to their caravans and the extras, some made up with ghastly wounds, collapse onto the pavements to talk and smoke, fraternise with the spectators or slake their thirst with cold Dutch beer. The unit technicians meanwhile are more than busy repeating the same lengthy business of setting up once more for the next take. SS-Hauptsturmführer Gräbner with his SS Reconaissance Battalion must have thundered across Deventer Bridge more than a dozen times and he himself suffered his fiery death at least six times over.

Gräbner's charge, frightening on the screen in its seeming fiery, impetuous brutality, was a carefully staged affair. The sketch artist, Michael White, had planned each stage and each incident on an overall chart, which was then translated onto the separate sketches of the story board. The whole scene was first rehearsed on a marked-out area at the back of the factory at Twello where all the 20 armoured cars, scout cars, half-tracks and Kubelwagens taking part were based. The drivers, from what came to be known as Charlie Mann's Squadron, together with the unit stunt crew and a bunch of tough Dutch stunt men all under Alf Joint (who later broke a shoulder 'falling off' a roof), practised each individual move over the bridge.

This charge, repeated many times over during a week's filming, was a spectacular event. Each time the vehicles with their SS infantry crews, were lined up on the reverse side of the bridge while the waiting British Paratroopers, played by the keen APA, waited at windows and on rooftops, weapons at the ready. With the lighting set and the cameras in position the spectators were shepherded by the patient Dutch police into safety and all inhabitants in the overlooking block of flats took cover inside their homes. Following shouts of, 'Quiet everywhere!', on the command from the Assistant Director, David Tomblin, 'Come ahead! Come ahead!' the mad charge was let loose on Deventer and its inhabitants. Major-General John Frost watching it from the roof top of the house acting as his HQ said, 'It was better than the real thing!' Undoubtedly, this three minute scene, brilliantly edited by the unit editor Tony Gibbs, is the high point of the whole film. A rough cut was quickly made and Joe Levine took it to the USA to help sell his film to the waiting distributors.

Above: **THE FILM. The Gräbner attack filmed on the bridge across the IJssel at Deventer. Charlie Mann's Hotchkiss Brandt/Marder and the Hanomag replica sprout calor-gas flames.** *Below:* **David Tomblin, Assistant Director, on the rostrum directs the attack with the Stunt Arranger, Alf Joint.**

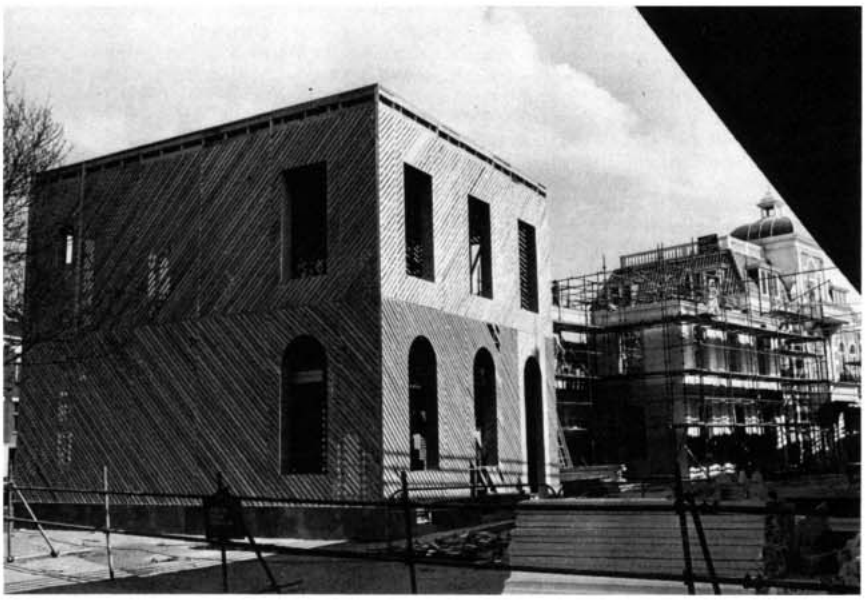


Above: **Wreckage from the real attack of the Aufklärungsbatallion of the 9. SS Panzerdivision 'Hohenstauffen' commanded by SS-Hauptsturmführer Viktor-Eberhard Gräbner who died in the attack on September 18. He was buried at Arnhem but when the German dead were moved to Ysselsteyn Soldatenfriedhof after the war, his remains could not be identified (IWM).** *Below:* **The bridge today.**

THE FILM. *Above:* **Geoffrey Unsworth, Director of Photography, watches as two APA soldiers get ready with a mock-up flame-thrower (which fired paraffin about 15 yards) for the attack on the pillbox. The flame misses, hitting instead some wooden ammunition huts which explode setting alight the paintwork on the bridge — rather falsely portrayed** *(above)* **using piped calor-gas.**

Deventer was also given three nights of firework displays — first, when the scene was shot in which a flame-thrower misses a German pill box and instead hits several wooden huts, supposedly filled with explosives. In 1944, the explosion set fire to the paintwork on the girders of the bridge and the recreation entailed a lengthy process of cladding the girders with asbestos and installing gas pipes along them over the great arch. The final cleaning up and repainting of the smoke-blackened bridge was a long and tedious job.

The eight houses built on the car park on either side of the northern ramp were a great achievement and attracted many visitors. The art department had constructed models of the whole bridge area in both its original state and in various damaged conditions as the battle progressed — after Gräbner's charge, the attack by German tanks and the final destruction by SS Infantry and SP guns. The immaculate houses were systematically pock-marked, holed and burned and, on one day, a real fire in the main house (soon brought under control by the ever-ready Deventer firemen) added realism. On another occasion, in the final bridge battle scene, a Dutch Army Leopard tank, representing a Tiger, turned too sharply over a pile of rubble and ploughed through a corner of one house bringing it down in a realistic manner.



Above: **Six houses were constructed on the car park adjoining the Deventer bridge. The one on the right was used as John Frost's HQ during the filming although his real headquarters building in 1944 was about a hundred yards away from the bridge.** *Below:* **The dramatic scene from the film as a Dutch Army Leopard tank demolishes one of the houses by mistake.**

The model of Deventer bridge built by the Art Department to plan the progressive destruction of the houses. On the left, the modern block of flats which caused a great problem during the filming on the bridge.

THE FILM. The General (Sean Connery) emerges from No. 88 (should be No. 14) after a patrol of the South Staffords attacks the German tank crew, an event which never actually took place.

Above: **THE FILM. A house in Deventer was used to represent the one in Arnhem where Major-General Urquhart was surrounded by German troops. A Dutch Leopard, disguised by Charlie Mann with the addition of metal sheeting and with the fume extractor on the barrel taped-up, masquerades as the original German SP gun.** *Below:* **The real Zwarteweg in Arnhem with No. 14 on the left.**

In June, the last remnants of Frost's 'wounded' men were taken away by the SS and Deventer's war ended. The unit construction teams started work at once to remove all the signs of death and destruction and restore the bridge and the car park to its original state by the set date, after which a hefty penalty could be incurred.

Other scenes in Deventer were far less damaging. Major-General Urquhart's escapade, when surrounded and cut off by the Germans in Arnhem's western suburbs, was filmed in a remarkably similar area of Deventer. On two separate Sundays, the lovely town square with its wide market-place, surrounded by trees and old houses, represented Bourg Leopold in Belgium where Lieutenant-General Horrocks drove through rows of parked jeeps to brief all the Commanding Officers of his Corps in a cinema on the forthcoming operation. Later, on a very hot Sunday morning, the square became Eindhoven and was filled with 1,200 Dutch civilian extras going wild with joy as 'Joe' Vandeleur's Sherman tanks push their way through the milling mass of orange to continue their advance up 'Hell's Highway' — the one single road to the north. A number of the Dutch people playing the part of Eindhoven's population had themselves felt the joy of liberation in 1944 and threw themselves nostalgically into the part.

On three occasions Deventer had to suffer ordeal by fire. Two scenes depict the senior British Airborne doctor and a Dutch doctor (played by Laurence Olivier) being taken to the German SS HQ through the devastated streets of Arnhem and a third shows Dutch civilians building barricades of rubble, damaged vehicles and human bodies in desperate efforts to stop the German armour.

As it was in 1944. On September 29, Sergeant Gee photographed transport moving north out of Eindhoven along Hell's Highway passing the mill of P. van der Linden (IWM).

Alas, today the road north out of Eindhoven has been completely altered. The mill, which was demolished in the 1960s, stood on Vlokhovense Weg. Two trees mark the original line of the road.

THE FILM. *Above:* **The Hartenstein Hotel at Oosterbeek was actually the burnt-out shell of a country house near Deventer refaced by the film company complete with plaster balustrade.**

Above: **Extras being positioned for one of the final scenes by assistant director Roy Button, after the hotel had been realistically 'damaged' by the Art Department.**

The other main location was on the outskirts of Deventer — the fire-blackened ruin of a lovely Dutch country house standing in its own grounds of some 20 acres. The house had been empty and had been gutted by a fire started by hippy squatters; Deventer city had taken it over and leased the house and grounds to the film company for the summer, after which, it was rumoured, it was to become a crematorium.

The unit repaired the facade of the house to give it a vague resemblance to the Hartenstein Hotel at Oosterbeek. The hall and the main dining room were also given a new look but the rest remained a burnt-out shell and indeed, by the time filming had ended, the whole house was in the same state.

This house is first used as Generalfeldmarschall Model's HQ at the time of the landing (this artistic licence stretched history by some 300 yards to Model's real HQ — the Tafelberg Hotel). Numerous scenes were shot in the house and grounds depicting the worsening situation of the Airborne division. The film concentrates on this house to the extent that the audience may get the impression that the fighting at Oosterbeek took place only in this small area as there is no effort to depict the 1,000 yard wide perimeter based on the river by Oosterbeek church. Similarly, the plight of the wounded in the various hotels and houses on the perimeter is shown by concentrating attention on Kate ter Horst's house only, which historically contained relatively few of the wounded (about 200) compared to the larger numbers in the hotels.

The Deventer 'Hartenstein' was also used for the abortive resupply scenes. Initially, supply parachutes were dropped by the unit special effects team from high crane rigs and these close-up scenes were then cut into some actual supply drops, carried out first by a formation of four Dakotas of the Danish Air Force and then by a single Dakota over the Hartenstein. The latter was flown by the very experienced pilot John Hawke, who was able to drop single containers almost exactly where the cameramen wanted. Then, with smoke canisters streaming smoke from a wing, he simulated a crash, several times over,

Left and above: **Soldiers, either from the 2nd South Staffordshires or Glider Pilots, photographed by Sergeant Smith on September 17, 1944, on the Duitse Kampweg at Wolfheze (IWM).**

Left and above: **Men of C Company, the Border Regiment, dug in alongside the Van Lenneweg close by the Hartenstein, were photographed by Sergeant Smith on September 20 (IWM).**

disappearing from sight behind a tall beech tree in the direction of Deventer in a vast explosion of flame and smoke by courtesy of special effects.

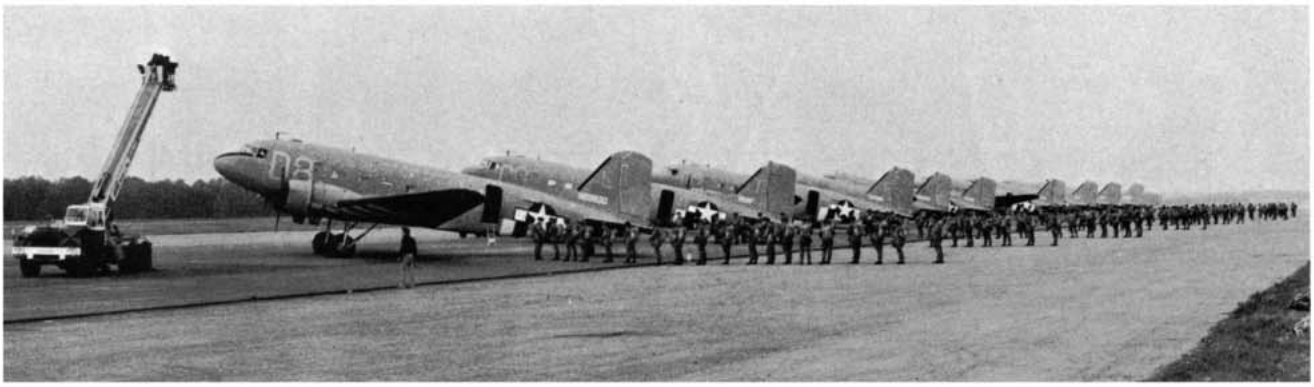
In a recreation park a few miles from Deventer a Dutch canal bridge was built over the narrow neck of a lake. This was then blown up in the face of Elliott Gould playing an American 101st Airborne Colonel, who then, in later scenes, 'over supervised' in dramatic fashion (but historically untrue) the building of a Bailey bridge by British engineers. This scene took several days and nights to film with the help of a RNA Engineer Squadron and instructors from their Engineers School; the bridge material came from the school with some from BAOR. Unfortunately, most of the Dutch conscripts refused to have their long hair cut, even with a 50 guilder bribe, so most of the work in the picture was done by their officers and NCOs and by the ubiquitous APA and the hard-core of extras. To ease the operation, both financially and in time, the bridge classification was lower than that required for the situation and it could not support a proper Sherman. However, when this scene appears in the film, as the leading elements of XXX Corps resume their advance in the half-gloom of dawn, it is really a column of plastic Shermans which rattle over the completed bridge.

Another major battle area used was a small part of the Dutch tank ranges at Amersfoort some 50 kilometres west of Deventer. Most of these scenes were filmed by a second unit, which came over from England in July. The first scene involved the whole of the unit's armoured column — real and plastic Shermans, half-tracks, armoured cars, scout cars and, to give it weight, the Dutch Army provided Leopard and AMX tanks in the background. The initial break-out scenes were shot with an opening barrage of special effects explosions, with cuts to a still-surviving Dutch Army 25-pdr battery photographed in British livery on its artillery range to the north. The leading Irish Guards soon met heavy German opposition, which blocked the one highway axis until blasted out by RAF Typhoons played in the film by four Harvards suitably made up and dropping 'special effects' bombs made from fire extinguishers. Brigadier 'Joe' Vandeleur was present during these long, hot, dusty and dirty days watching Michael Caine acting his own part as CO of the Irish Guards.

The static scenes on the Dropping and Landing Zones were filmed on Ginkelsche Heide, near Ede, which was the wartime DZ of the 4th Parachute Brigade. On three of the hottest days of a hot summer, some 500 British Airborne troop extras and 200 unit members sweated on the dusty heathland, to film, first, the arrival at his DZ rendezvous of Lieutenant-Colonel John Frost. Then, a few days later, a corner of the glider LZ was filmed to show the unloading of the gliders and the airborne troops moving off, encouraged by 'lunatics' from a bombed-out asylum at Wolfheze. In a quickly set up Command Post nearby, Major-General Urquhart hears of the first mishaps which in the end brought disaster to his division — failure of the radios and the non-arrival of most of the jeep recce squadron.

Above: **This is as far as a real 30-ton Sherman could traverse the single-single Bailey built to simulate the Class 40 110ft bridge built by 14 Field Squadron, RE at Son in eleven hours on the night of September 18/19.** *Below:* **Michael Caine with the real 'Joe' Vandeleur.**

Replica Horsa gliders being erected on a corner of Ginkelsche Heide which represented the LZ of the first day.



Although it was originally intended to shoot the main parachuting scenes on the Ginkelsche Heide DZ, it soon became apparent that there would be snags to its use: first, a new autobahn ran along the approach end and its traffic could not be stopped and secondly, the DZ could be approached by many other roads and tracks thus making control of the crowds coming out to watch very difficult. The DZ is the one used each year for the memorial drop by 10 PARA(TAVR) which attracts up to 50,000 spectators.

It was planned that the first drop depicting the British landing would be filmed entirely from the air; thus it was important that nothing untoward on the ground would be visible. Therefore, with the help of Wing Commander Mike Jenkins, RAF, OC of the RAF team responsible for flight safety of the parachuting scenes, a similar DZ some 20 kilometres north on Speulde Heide was selected. This had few modern intrusions near it and was easier to police.

The parachute scenes were filmed in September, not necessarily to fit in with the actual dates of 1944 but to coincide with the only period during which the British parachute troops were available. The 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, which had recently returned from Berlin, was due to fly to Cyprus for a tour with the UN Forces. Exercise New Market/Gulls Wing was drawn up and approved by the Ministry of Defence as a training exercise and 350 officers and men carried out aircraft familiarisation training on the Dakota at the Airborne Museum, Aldershot, before flying to Holland by charter aircraft. There they were accommodated in the RNAF barracks at Deelen airfield ready to carry out five descents for the film interspersed with their own training programme.

Prior to this, during the spring and summer, the RAF team had been studying the safety and technical aspects of converting civilian C47 aircraft and parachuting from them. This may seem a superfluous exercise, knowing the extent to which the C47 was and, indeed, is still used as a paratroop aircraft, but the Dakotas to be used were a mixed bag and, more importantly, the modern PX parachutes had not been cleared for use from this type of aircraft. Tests with dummies were carried out in UK on the first aircraft available and then RAF instructors made the first live descents. Initially, there were one or two incidents of canopies brushing the tailplane, but this problem was soon overcome.

Top and above: **Soldiers of the present day 1 Parachute Battalion show how it's done.**

Left: **Wing Commander Mike Jenkins, of HQ38 Group, leader of the RAF parachute Planning and Control Group for the film.** *Above:* **Two Dakotas at the beginning of the run-in over Speulde DZ.**

AVON

Originally it was hoped that the film company would be able to buy or rent at least twelve C47 aircraft from various sources but this proved a difficult task. In the end a force of eleven aircraft was mustered at Deelen including four purchased from civilian sources: two, decidedly the worse for wear, from Air Djibouti and two from the ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa, all of which had to be converted back to a military role. Of the other seven, all were military aircraft with crews trained in paratroop dropping, three coming from the Royal Danish Air Force and four from the Finnish Air Force. These needed little conversion except to change over the cable and strongpoint to a floor position for the British parachute and to give them a coat of paint, new numbers and interchangeable RAF and USAAC insignia. It was unfortunate that the colour scheme chosen by the art department was wrong, i.e. a desert brown instead of the olive drab of all US transport aircraft, but this was done to make the aircraft more visible against the dark background of the heath.

All the aircrew were quickly checked out in parachuting techniques by the RAF safety team and they then started on the more difficult task of flying in tight formations to simulate the formation used in 1944 a 'Vic of Vics' or a 9-ship element. This proved not feasible in the time available and the more prosaic but safer, 'Vics in line astern' was used with, on two occasions, a five aircraft Vic. Several aircraft were fitted with cameras in the astrodome, under the belly, on the port wing and in the cockpit by the aerial cameraman, Robin Browne, and some excellent close-up shots of the paratroopers jumping were obtained. Other cameras were mounted in a helicopter flying near the DZ and in a twin-engined Aztec flying behind or above the formations.

The main difficulty in the parachuting scenes and, indeed, in the flying sequences was to add body to the formations. Eleven Dakotas and, on some occasions, only nine due to unserviceability, had to be made to look like a hundred or more flying in the wide 1944 American formations. This was done optically after the main filming was completed, by the expert in this act of deception — Wally Veevers.

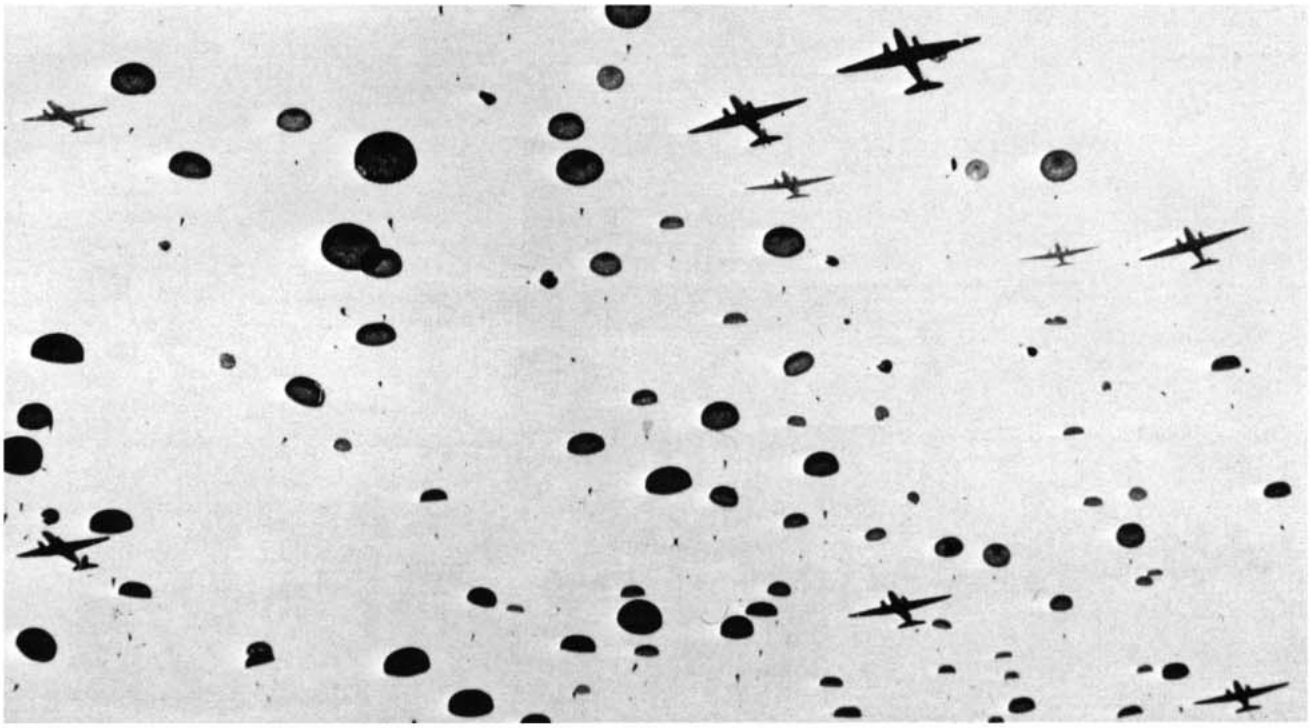
The Parachute Regiment contingent made one practice descent — their first from the Dakota — in separate Vic formations and these were filmed primarily as a preliminary exercise for the camera teams in the air and on the ground. The film was then rushed to the London studios by John Hawke in his Aztec accompanied by Richard Attenborough and the Director of Photography, Geoffrey Unsworth, who were able to view the rushes on the following morning in order to make any alterations to the filming arrangements and suggest possible improvements to the flying procedures.

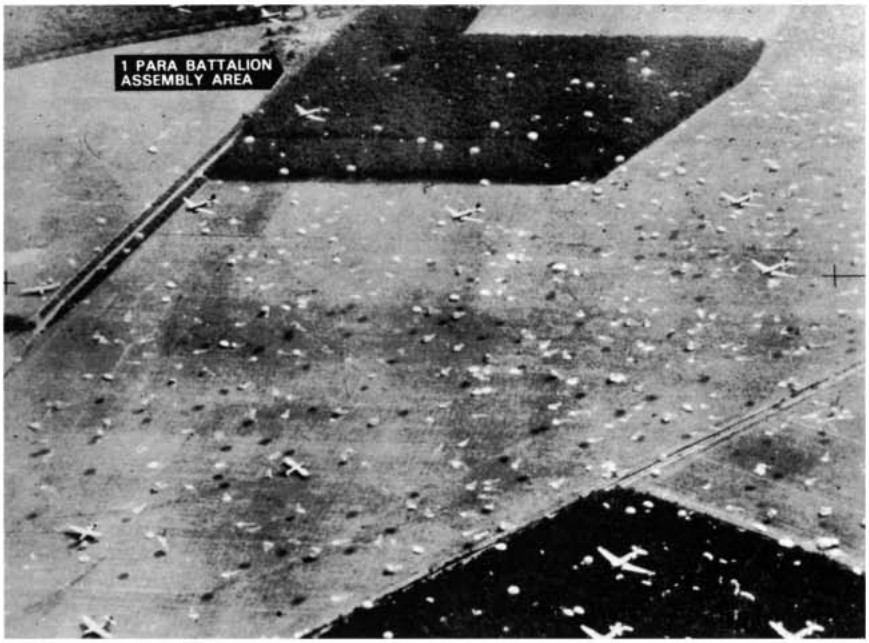
After a day's break involving numerous meetings and briefings, the main parachute sequences began and it was at this stage that the weather, which had blessed the unit's operations for five months, decided to turn sour at the most critical time. Although the weather was fine with little wind, which was good for the paratroopers, a misty haze under thin cloud made for poor visibility for the aircrew and bad light for the cameramen. The RAF meteorological detachment became the key in making the vital decision — when to jump? The Services side could be fairly flexible as the filming was combined with a ground training exercise, but the logistics of the film unit were more diverse as they involved bringing the various departments together and setting them up in their different

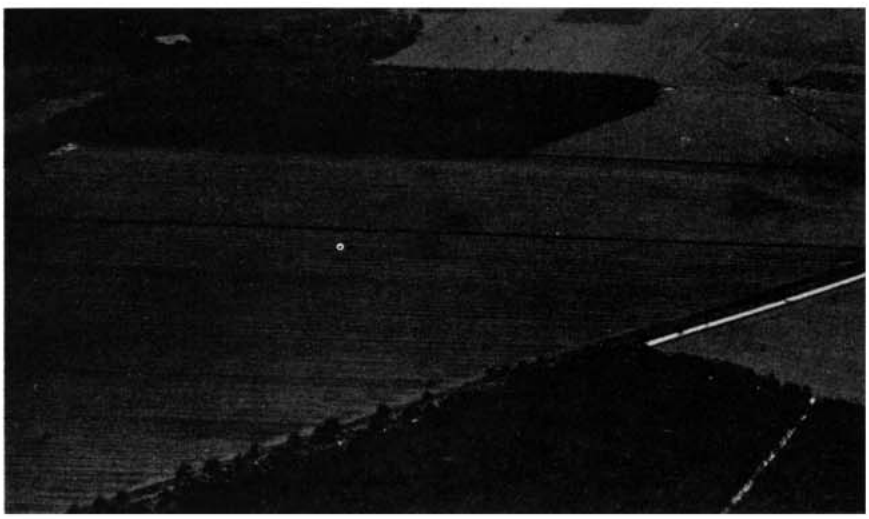
Right: **The real air armada, flying in 'Vic of Vics' formation (which could not be simulated in the film) photographed crossing Gheel in Belgium (IWM).**

Above: **Not content with a private army, this is producer Attenborough's Private Air Force! The eleven Dakotas on their dispersal area at Deelen Airfield, north of Arnhem.**

Above: **One of the eleven ground cameras set up and camouflaged on the dropping zone for the parachute scenes. This one was at the run-in end 400 yards off the flight line.**







Above: **THE FILM. The parachute drop as seen from the ground.** *Right:* **DZ X at Jonkershoeve (looking south) on September 17, 1944 (IWM).** *Bottom:* **The same area, virtually unchanged, just west of Wolfheze.**

locations. The biggest problem was calling up the 500 or so extras to represent paratroopers who had already landed. As they came from far and wide, and had to report to the wardrobe department for kitting and arming six hours before the drop, at least a day's notice was required; furthermore, as their bill for the day would be around £50,000, including transport, pay and rations, the decision could not be taken lightly.

After a very hectic week, another four complete jumps in formation were carried out with fair success. Considering that the troops had only arrived ten days before, and the aircraft had been collected from various corners of the world, and that many of the aircrew were untrained in paratroop operations or tight formation flying, this was a remarkable achievement — the instant airborne Task Force. It was most fortunate too that there were only five major parachuting casualties all of whom happily recovered after spells in hospital. (Rather more painful for the soldier involved was the 85 days detention meted out by a court-martial to one eighteen-year-old who refused the order to jump at the last moment! Ed.)

Many old airborne men will no doubt notice that the parachutists did not jump with the 1944 equipment or weapons — kitbags, rifle/Bren, valises etc. — but, for safety reasons, this was not allowed with the PX parachute and modern weapons containers, with the SLR or Sterling, were used instead. On these actual drops, and on the ones filmed earlier for the British and American DZ scenes, some 400-500 extras were used to thicken up the scene on the ground. The extras were organized into sections of about fifteen each under an APA member as Commander and placed into position across the DZ with orders to move smartly towards the RVs marked by different coloured smoke. Initially, the men were sprinting past the cameras despite being told that they must act as if they were carrying a 90lb load but, as the long, hot day wore on, their dash and enthusiasm were suitably reduced.

The Royal Netherlands Air Force base at Deelen, seven kilometres north of Arnhem, was the location for a number of scenes. In 1944, this was a heavily-defended German airfield and it was planned that the British airborne troops would capture it to allow the landing of the 52nd Lowland Division and further supplies for the Airborne Corps. Deelen is now a RNAF helicopter base and the runways and taxi-tracks are not, of course, used. The unit set up a tented base in one corner where the gliders were re-assembled for the emplaning and take-off scenes in UK after they had first been used for the landing scenes! In August, the Unit Air Force started to assemble — the eleven Dakotas together with the four Harvards and an Auster. Various emplaning scenes were filmed depicting glider loading of British and American troops and endless taxi-ing and take-off shots were taken which, by imaginative cutting, give the appearance of masses of aircraft on the airfield. It also appears that the gliders take off and are in flight behind their tugs but this is all trickery as no flyable gliders were made.

Above: **The realistic scene at Deelen aerodrome which doubled as an English airfield.**
Below: **Neil Williams, renowned British aerobatic and display pilot, flies Spitfire F.IX (MH434) G-ASJV on a simulated photographic reconnaissance sortie north of Arnhem. The boy on the bicycle is played by Eric van't Wout.**

Harvards with painted-out rear cockpits done up to vaguely look like Typhoons.

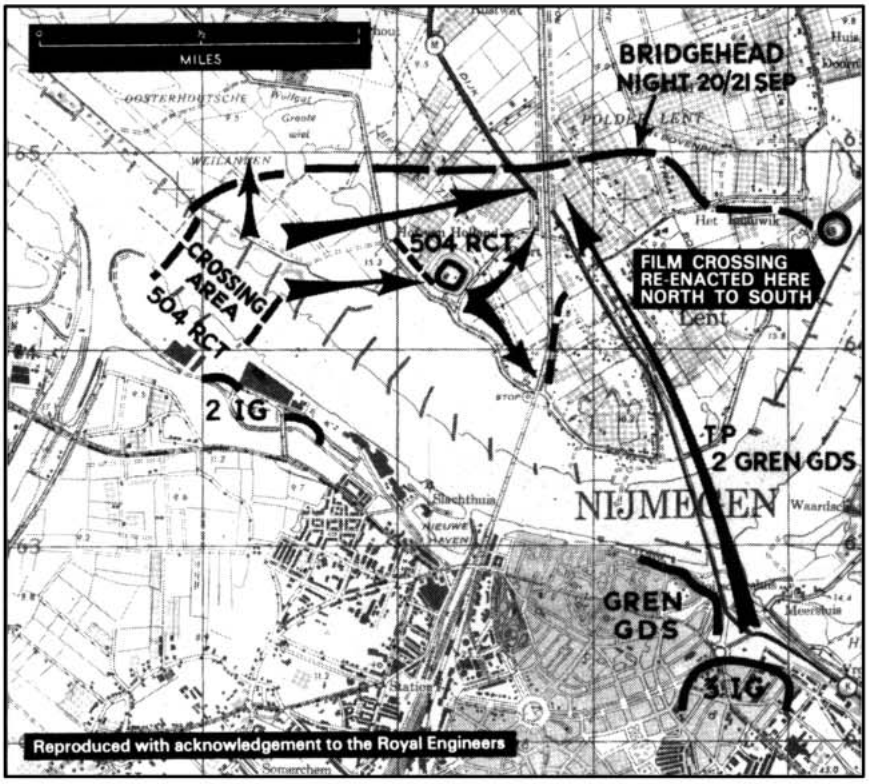
Above: **THE FILM. Leopard/Panthers cross Nijmegan bridge to reinforce the city.** *Right:* **1944. Sergeant Midgley's picture of the bridge on September 21 — a dead German lies in the gutter (IWM).**

Another major battleground for the unit was Nijmegan bridge and the river Waal. Although this bridge, one of the biggest in Europe, is an important traffic point, all road and river traffic was stopped for short periods on a number of Sunday mornings starting at an early hour. The first scene was the one depicting the German reinforcement of Nijmegen from the north which involved all the unit's German vehicles and eight Dutch Army AMX SP guns, with 400 extras. This involved a military style movement plan (devised by myself), to get the force from Deventer into starting positions near the bridge at first light. One hour only was allowed but in this time it was possible to move the column three times over the bridge and around a traffic circuit at either end. Unknowing tourists driving across the bridge in the intervals between takes were astounded to pass massed 'German' armour and troops lining the roadway.

As it was in 1944. The Guards Armoured Division streams northwards past a shot-up Wehrmacht bus.

A modern German vehicle gets shot near the same spot in April 1977 — but only on film.

Above: **THE FILM. GIs of the 504 RCT of Brigadier-General James Gavin's 82nd Airborne Division prepare to storm the Rhine, filmed at a spot about three miles upstream from the real crossing site** *(right)* **pictured in April 1977.**



The bridge was used on two more occasions to film its capture by the American airborne troops. This scene unfortunately was the source of much controversy and has attracted considerable correspondence in the national press. Initially, the scriptwriter, in an effort to produce a dramatic part for Robert Redford, playing Major Julian Cook, altered history to the extent that it would have given the impression that the Americans captured the road bridge whereupon the Guards Armoured Division tanks were waved across by Redford.

In reality, the 504 RCT of the 82nd Airborne Division made one of the wars bravest assaults by crossing the wide, fast flowing Waal River a mile west of the rail bridge, storming ashore to capture a Dutch fort and pressing on to capture the railway bridge. At this point, a troop of tanks of the 2nd Armoured Battalion, the Grenadier Guards, with Sergeant P. T. Robinson in the lead, stormed across the huge road bridge against heavy opposition and pushed on for 1,500 yards into the village to the north where they met up with the Americans at dusk.

Repeated advice by the military advisors caused Richard Attenborough to re-think the scene and a last-minute compromise was made. A scene was added depicting the Guards fighting in the streets of Nijmegen and heading for the bridge and this was also an example of the unit's fast action capability for instant filming. A small square near the river front was rented for two hours from dawn, and, in that time, tons of rubble, house debris, burning trucks, bent guns and broken bodies were strewn across the area and some 100 British and German troops plus four Sherman tanks battled across it and on to the bridge. On the last 'Cut!' the hard-working props team moved in with lorries, hoses and brooms to restore the square to its usual Sunday morning calm.

During the action, a Dutch householder came sleepily out on to the balcony of his bedroom to take the air and see what had disturbed his sleep. He looked down into his front garden to see two gory German bodies slumped over a machine gun whereupon he

THE FILM. The assault craft, powered by outboard motors, enter the Rhine.

turned sharply back, slammed the doors tight and firmly pulled down the blinds to shut out the nightmare!

(Sir Richard Attenborough explained to the editor, at the Press preview of the film, that the actions of capturing the Nijmegan road and rail bridges were both amalgamated. Also the scene which had been filmed of Robert Redford waving the British tanks across, which had caused all the uproar, does not even appear in the final version of the film! He felt that the advance Press criticism of the Redford episode was unfair, especially as the picture was not even finished at the time and when no one had seen the completed film.)

The scene of Cook's crossing was filmed two miles upstream from the road bridge, instead of one mile downstream of the rail bridge and in the wrong direction, i.e. north to south. This was necessary, it was stated, to obtain two suitable filming locations, one for the assembly and launching area and the other for the landing beach on the far side; perhaps only a few experts will notice the current is flowing the wrong way!

In 1944, this actual crossing was a most gallant assault in which over half the leading battalion were lost to enemy fire and drowning. Only 32 canvas assault boats were available with limited numbers of paddles to cross the 400 yards of river flowing at five knots, swept by enemy fire. In 1976, with a bunch of actors, extras and stuntmen, this was also quite a feat although the assault boats were neatly fitted with an outboard engine in the centre to add power to the rifle butts and paddles. Miraculously, several crossings were made and even more simulated launchings and landings without any mishaps. The never-ending flow of river traffic had to be halted for various periods of time — a far more difficult operation than stopping vehicles on a road. The unit location was centred on a hospitable cafe, which did a roaring trade in cold drinks during the long hours of waiting and hot, strong drinks to dry out the damp participants.

THE FILM. Robert Redford, (with white striped helmet), as Major Julian Cook, leads the attack on the northern approach to the bridge.

Left and above: **1944. Real 82nd Airborne troops pass the grave of an American soldier in the verge of St. Canisius Singel as they approach Nijmegen bridge from the south (US Army).**

One of the best sets, located on the outskirts of Bronkhorst, a lovely old village a few kilometres south of Zutphen, was the excellent reproduction of Oosterbeek church and churchyard and a small country house with garden simulating that of Kate ter Horst. Kate ter Horst, still living in her old rectory at Oosterbeek, came to visit the filming and to offer advice. Her husband related how, after the battle, he had returned and with the help of two friends buried the bodies of 64 airborne soldiers in their garden who had died of wounds in the house during its use as an aid post.

A now-bypassed loop of the IJssel river was a convenient location for two river crossing scenes — the abortive effort by Major-General Sosabowski and some of his Polish Brigade to cross the Rhine to come to the aid of the Airborne Division and, later, the final evacuation of Major-General Urquhart and the remnants of his Division. Three very damp nights were spent on these scenes, particularly the latter one, because heavy rain had to be simulated. Rain-making machines and the local fire brigade saw to it that everyone was kept in a suitably sodden condition all night and, before each take, the Assistant Director called together the 500 extras, together with Sean Connery and the other actors, for a good hose down!

Close-ups of the Polish crossing and also of Cook's crossing of the Waal, were done in a specially-built tank near Deventer on the IJssel river at a Dutch Army amphibious training area.

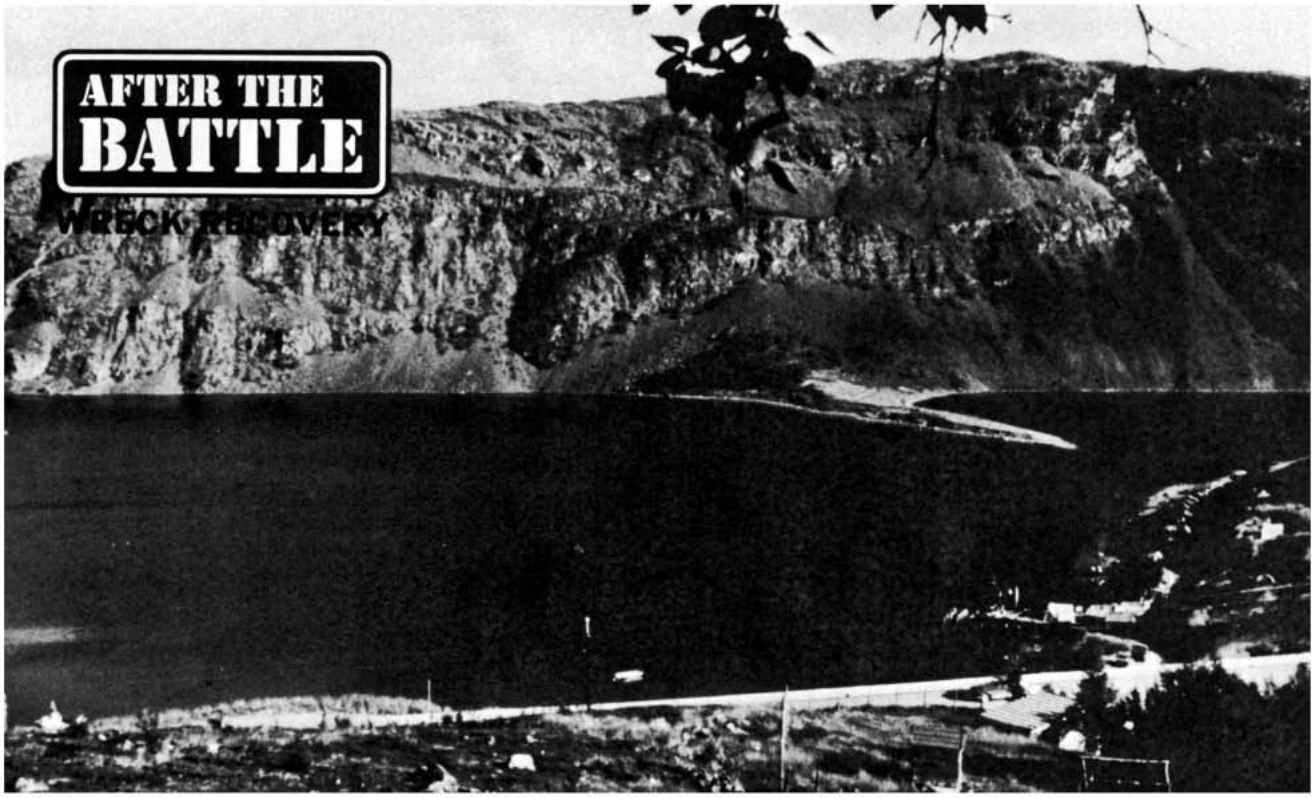
A number of houses in the countryside surrounding Deventer were used as HQs or medical dressing stations for the different armies. They were indeed brave owners who allowed a film unit to invade their property and, in the space of a few hours, festoon it with cables, lights, cameras, vehicles, caravans and tents. The owners, however, seemed most friendly and hospitable and an efficient props team moved in afterwards to clear up the mess and to make good any damage to house or garden.

The unit was able to have four days leave over the August bank holiday and this was a badly needed rest for all. Work had continued at the same cracking pace with hardly one day off during the 4½ months of filming and everyone was exhausted. Remarkably, production was up to schedule — an almost impossible achievement with such a complicated and full programme. It was made possible by Sir Richard Attenborough's own personal leadership, the excellent hard working team spirit of the unit crews and, the marvellous weather during the summer of 1976.

Below: **1944. Photo by Sergeant Gee of XXX Corps crossing Grave bridge over the Maas, captured intact by the 82nd Airborne Division (IWM).** *Below right:* **THE FILM. The same bridge with Charlie Mann's Bedford QL and Fordson WOT 6.**

Above: **The 'Oosterbeek church and rectory' set being constructed outside Bronkhorst village only to be destroyed by the Art Department** *(below).*

Above: **The water tank — note the outboard engines for wave-making on the right.**



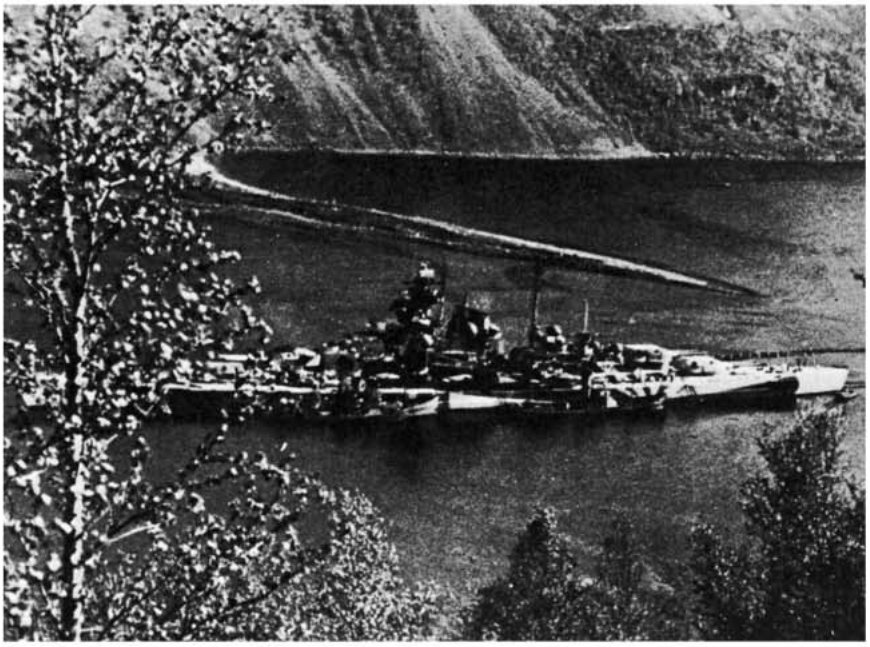
THE SEARCH FOR THE X5

Peter Cornish, National Coach for the British Sub-Aqua Club, East Anglian area, will be no stranger to regular readers of *After the Battle*. We have already reported two of his previous wreck recoveries and can now give the complete account of Peter's largest expedition to date, one which has occupied a major part of his time over the last four years. It concerns his search for the ill-fated British midget submarines sent to attack the German battleship *Tirpitz* in Altenfjord, Norway in September 1943, never to return. This is his own story of his attempt to locate and recover one of those submarines — *X5*.

Since the early stages of the *HMS XE8* recovery project (*see After the Battle No 2*) I had been very interested in the future possibilities of diving on the site of where *Tirpitz* had lain in Altenfjord. With this in mind, I had approached the Naval Attaché at the British Embassy in Oslo to find out whether permission could be arranged to dive and establish the degree of diving activity in the fjord since the war. Lieutenant-Commander Croft replied to my November '71 letter by saying that the Norwegian Ministry of Defence basically had no objection at all.

It had been here at the far end of Kaafjord in Altenfjord, North Cape, that 'Operation Source' had been mounted on September 22, 1943. The plan had been to attack the three German capital ships which the Germans had sited at Altenfjord ready to break out into the Atlantic or to threaten the Russian convoys. These ships were the *Lützow, Scharnhorst* and the battleship *Tirpitz*. The plan was for the six Royal Naval midget submarines *HMS X5, X6, X7, X8, X9* and *X10* to attack these vessels in Altenfjord during September 20-25, 1943, when the moon was in the last quarter and would provide enough light for navigation through the fjords.

During the passage across the North Sea to Norway, when the midget submarines were towed alternately above and below the surface by one T-class and five S-class submarines, *HMS X9* was lost when her tow-line parted from her parent submarine *HMS Syrtis* and she was never seen again. *X8* was also having trouble with flooding of her starboard saddle charge and this was jettisoned at 4.35 p.m. on September 17 and, although it had been set to 'safe', it exploded fifteen minutes later about 1,000 yards astern, doing little damage to either *X8* or *HMS Seanymph*. After this the other charge also started flooding and this was finally jettisoned at 4.55 p.m. Since he distrusted the safe setting, the Captain set the time fuse to fire two hours later. At 6.40 p.m. it exploded about 3½ miles away. The result was terrific. The tremendous force flooded the wet and dry compartment, distorted every door and caused so much damage that *X8* was incapable of diving. Because of her condition,



Top: **Peaceful Kaafjord in northern Norway, scene of the midget submarine attack on the German 45,000-ton battleship Tirpitz** *(above)* **launched by Frau von Hassel on April 1, 1939 at Wilhelmshaven.**

HMS X6 photographed prior to the attack on the Tirpitz in which she was commanded by Lieutenant D. Cameron.

she was scuttled at 3.50 a.m. on September 18; 'Operation Source' was down to four midgets. *X10* was also having trouble but, by 8.00 p.m. on September 20, together with *X5, 6* and *7*, all were released off Soroy Sound. By the evening of the 21st, all four submarines had independently reached the Bratholme Islands about four miles from the entrance to Kaafjord.

X10 had suffered so many mechanical and electrical problems that her Captain, Lieutenant Hudspeth, was forced to decide that, in spite of all the efforts to get close to his target *Scharnhorst,* he would not be able to achieve combat efficiency — a bitter blow. However, although he was unaware of the fact, *Scharnhorst* had left her anchorage that afternoon for gunnery practice in Altenfjord and it was only on the return voyage to Kaafjord on the morning of the 22nd that she was informed that *Tirpitz* had been torpedoed. She turned around and proceeded instead to Lang Fjord so *X10* would not have found her at home.

The actual attack by *HMS X5, 6* and *7* has been well documented in various books and publications but the bones of the attack are as follows:

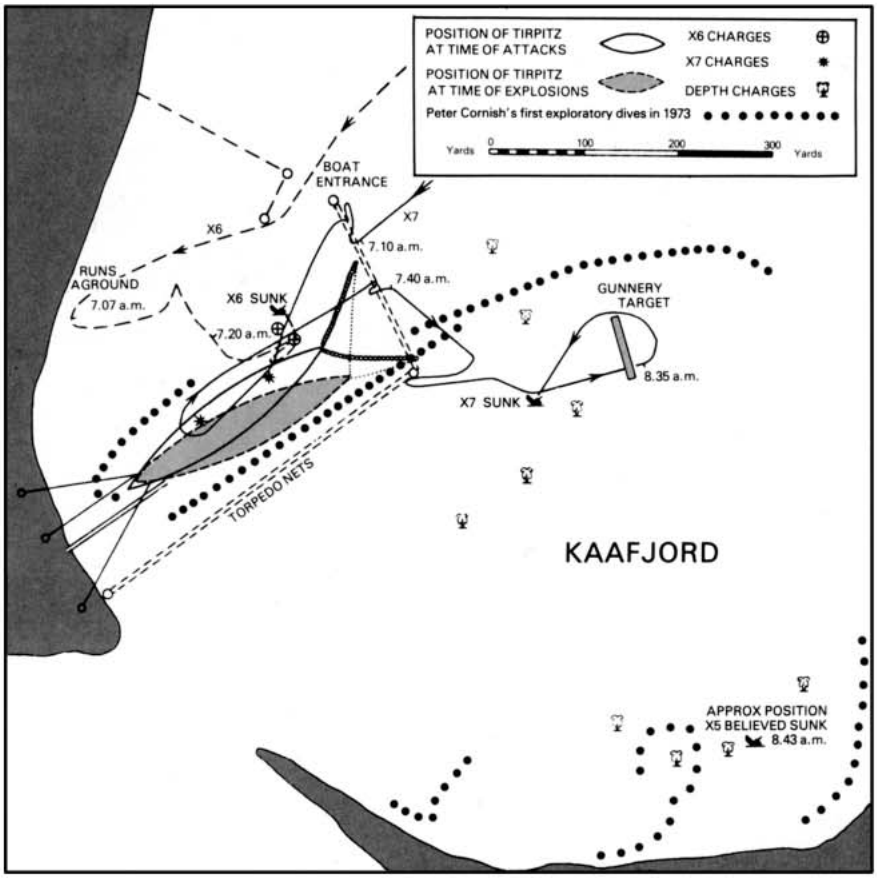
HMS X6 and *X7*, each with their four-man crews, managed to surprise the defences and lay their charges on the seabed below the keel of *Tirpitz*. The X-craft were each armed with two 2-ton saddle charges of Amatex.

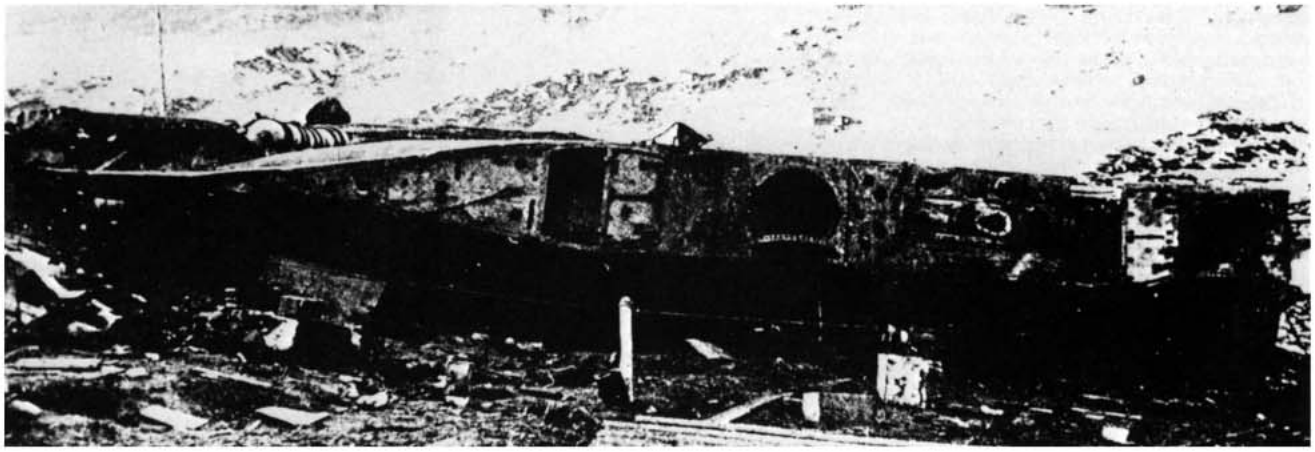
Following the laying of the charges, the element of surprise was quickly lost. *X6,* having experienced severe periscope difficulties on the way into her attack, was now virtually blind and was forced to surface on several occasions within the surrounding torpedo nets in an effort to determine her escape route. Each appearance on the surface was met with a furious barrage of small arms fire from the now fully-alert crew of *Tirpitz* but fortunately, due to her close proximity to the vessel, the main armament of *Tirpitz* could not be trained down sufficiently to be brought to bear. In the knowledge that her charges, and possibly those of other X-craft, could explode at any moment, she surfaced and scuttled herself at 7.30 a.m., thirty metres off the port bow of *Tirpitz,* and her four crew members were taken on board the battleship.

HMS X7 had also laid her charges but was hopelessly entangled in the torpedo nets about one hundred metres from the starboard side of *Tirpitz* at the moment of detonation of the charges. They exploded at 8.12 a.m. and lifted the 46,000-ton battleship, the pride of the German Navy, nearly two metres out of the water and gave her an immediate 15 degree list to port.

The explosion blew *X7* clear of the nets, and despite having suffered major damage her crew, although shaken, were still alive. After assessing the damage, her captain, Lieutenant Godfrey Place, attempted to scuttle the submarine which was now near a moored gunnery target. As he tried to get out, the submarine sank below him but he managed to scramble aboard the target from which he was quickly picked up by a German launch. *HMS X7* hit the seabed forty metres below but, after thirty minutes, only one of the three men left on board managed to get out by carrying out a submarine escape. He later reported that, due to the damage caused by the charges exploding, the submarine had been slow to flood up and the two remaining crewmen had drowned before they could escape.

At 8.43 a.m., thirty-one minutes after the explosion, another submarine was sighted by the Germans at 700 metres on a bearing of 070 degrees. The four-man crew of *HMS X6,* standing captive on the deck of *Tirpitz,* saw her erupt in a cloud of foam at an estimated five hundred and fifty yards on the starboard beam. Since *X10* never entered the anchorage this submarine could only have been the *X5* — her captain was Lieutenant Henty-Creer. *X5*





The wreck of HMS X7 (Lieutenant B. C. G. Place) after being recovered by the Kriegsmarine in October 1943.

lay on the surface and was repeatedly hit by the 105mm secondary armament of *Tirpitz* and quickly sank. A German destroyer, *Z29,* then dropped fourteen patterns of five depth charges, the fifth pattern bringing up a lot of oil and personal effects. Both *Tirpitz* and *Z29* claimed in their log books that they had sunk the submarine.

Considerable efforts were made by the German Navy to recover the wrecked X-craft for evaluation, whilst the six surviving Royal Naval seamen were interrogated and eventually sent to German POW camps.

The wreckage of *HMS X6* was quickly located but had been utterly shattered by her own charges, onto which she had settled, and she was judged to be of no consequence.

After three weeks, — two tugs *Arngast* and *Bardenfleth* wired the sunken remains of *X7* near the original location of the gunnery target and managed to get the wreckage ashore on the eastern side of the fjord. The entire bow section was found to be missing, presumably blown off by subsequent depth charging and, after a thorough examination, parts were removed and reputedly sent to Kiel in Germany. The remains of the two drowned crewmen were buried, with full military honours, at Tromso.

The Germans continued looking for *X5* but could not find her in the area where she was supposedly sunk and, with the Arctic winter fast approaching, the search was eventually abandoned.

Although the Admiralty was unaware of the fact, *Tirpitz* was crippled in the attack; her speed, after repair, was cut by five to six knots and this meant that she could not venture out into the Atlantic without an even greater risk of being caught. The Germans were obviously well aware of this since she never went to sea again.

About three months later, *Scharnhorst* left her anchorage in Altenfjord and was sunk off North Cape and, after prolonged repairs and several air attacks by RAF bombers and carrier-borne aircraft, *Tirpitz* left for Tromsofjord on October 15, 1944. Here she was sunk on November 12, 1944 by 'Tallboy' bombs of RAF Lancasters of Nos. 9 and 617 Squadrons.

Since the day *Tirpitz* left, it appears that nobody had ever dived or salvaged anything from Kaafjord. No one had ever been to see if *HMS X5* was on the seabed. Had she in fact escaped or had the primitive German salvage efforts simply failed to locate her? Was it conceivable that she might still be lying there, undetected after thirty-one years?

Also, since only the captains of *HMS X6* and *X7* received a Victoria Cross at the end of the war for their parts played in 'Operation Source', it would be fitting to locate *X5* and assess whether or not her captain had been able to lay his saddle charges successfully.

The opportunity to visit Alta came after a very interesting sixteen days at Lake Hoklingen where I had been involved in the successful recovery of a complete Halifax bomber shot down by *Tirpitz* on April 19, 1942. I arrived at Kaafjord on Thursday, July 4, 1973 and the next day, having hired the fishing boat of Arne and Trygue Daniloff (No. F.545A) for 70 Krone, I dived six times around the fjord — twice at the spot where *X5* supposedly sank but could not locate her. I found, however, so much wreckage and other material that I resolved to get together a good team and suitable equipment for a thorough search for the missing submarine.

A sixteen-man team of competent divers from the British Sub-Aqua Club was selected early in 1974 and preparations were made to obtain all the necessary equipment. Efforts were made to raise the necessary finance and to borrow from various sponsors all the equipment needed to carry out a comprehensive search and survey of the fjord. Considerable help came from industry, especially from Comex Diving (U.K.) Ltd., Comex Norge A/S and Fleet International Marine Ltd., London.

Decca Survey Ltd., provided a Sea-Fix Navigational Chain, on loan for two weeks, which was used to locate to an accuracy of less than one metre the position of our search boat within Kaafjord which measured approximately 5 x 1½ kms.

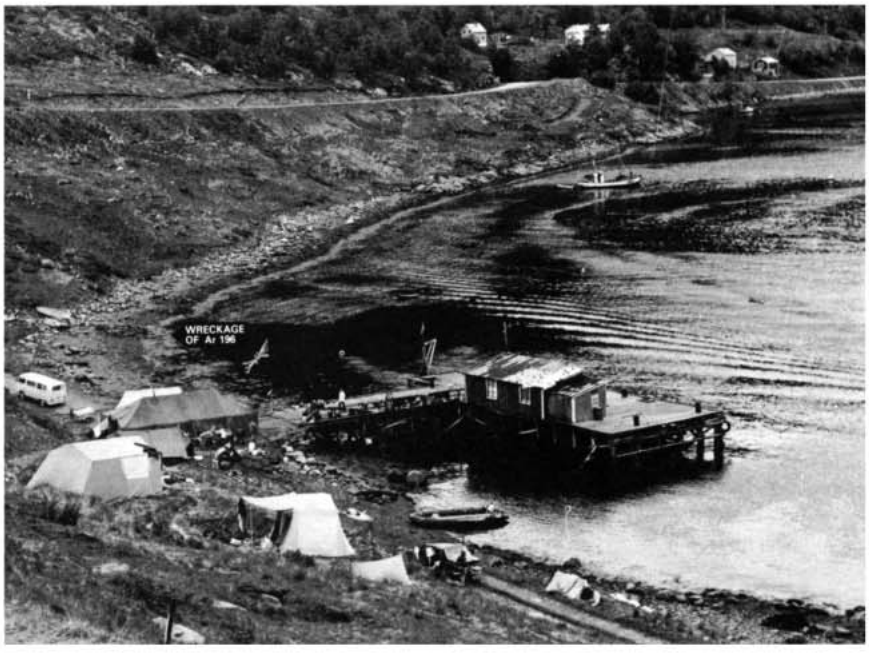
An EG and G dual channel side-scanning sonar was used to obtain acoustic 'photographs' of the seabed. In certain suitable conditions (such as a soft sandy bottom), this equipment will show up the presence of any wreckage on the seabed and, using the Sea-fix chain for positional control, can be used to establish its exact position.

A proton magnetometer was loaned to us by Littlemore Engineering Ltd. Essentially this apparatus records variations in the earth's magnetic field and it was hoped that it would be able to detect the large magnetic anomaly expected to be associated with a thirty-five ton submarine.

The two tons of stores and equipment was despatched by sea to the small port of Alta, some ten kilometres from Kaafjord, where the diving team eventually arrived by SAS DC9 on June 23, 1974.

Immediately on arrival, the team split into two parties; one party going to the docks to unload our containers and the other to Kaafjord to establish the campsite overlooking the fjord and adjacent to the original quay used to victual *Tirpitz.*

The weather for the first eleven days was really against us; heavy rain and air temperatures down to 2 degrees made life difficult. Nevertheless, the team rapidly undertook the immense amount of preparatory work necessary to commence search



The 1974 expedition campsite was set up adjacent to the original victualling quay used by the Tirpitz. The position where Stuart Usher, expedition photographer, found the wing of one of the battleships' Arado Ar 196 float planes is marked.

operations. The sea-fix slave stations were erected, one in the cabbage patch of a house overlooking the campsite, the other in a field full of sheep at the opposite end of Kaafjord.

The positions of the transit marker boards were surveyed and pegged out down the side of the roadway which ran parallel with the edge of the fjord. When in place, these marker boards, clearly visible from the bridge of our search boat, would allow the helmsman to sail in straight lines across the fjord at two hundred metre intervals whilst undertaking the sonar survey.

Our search boat, a locally hired trawler, was soon transformed from its original role, into a highly sophisticated vessel, bristling with aerials and electronic detection gear and, within seventy-two hours, was ready to begin the underwater survey.

Diving was soon in progress and the team quickly acclimatised themselves to the water which was very cold at 4-5 degrees C and which had a three-metre layer of freshwater on top of the seawater. We soon located the cluttered wrecks on the bottom and started to systematically dive on the known and interesting anomalies — measuring from one metre long to full size ships and other sections of broken wreckage. Regrettably, the magnetometer could not be used successfully as a clinical tool since there were too many magnetic anomalies for it to clearly distinguish between them.

Side-scan sonar would locate a query on the seabed whilst Decca Sea-Fix would ascertain the position of the survey vessel. The true position of the anomaly would then be plotted on a master chart and the survey boat would drop a buoy on the actual site. Two divers would be briefed on what they might expect to find and would then be sent down to investigate. In this manner we slowly but surely cleared the large number of queries all over the fjord and we had many interesting finds.

We located the scattered remains of two Fleet Air Arm Barracuda torpedo bombers and the crumpled wreck of a Grumman Hellcat, an American built, single-engine fighter used by the Fleet Air Arm. All of these were lost in aerial attacks during 1944.

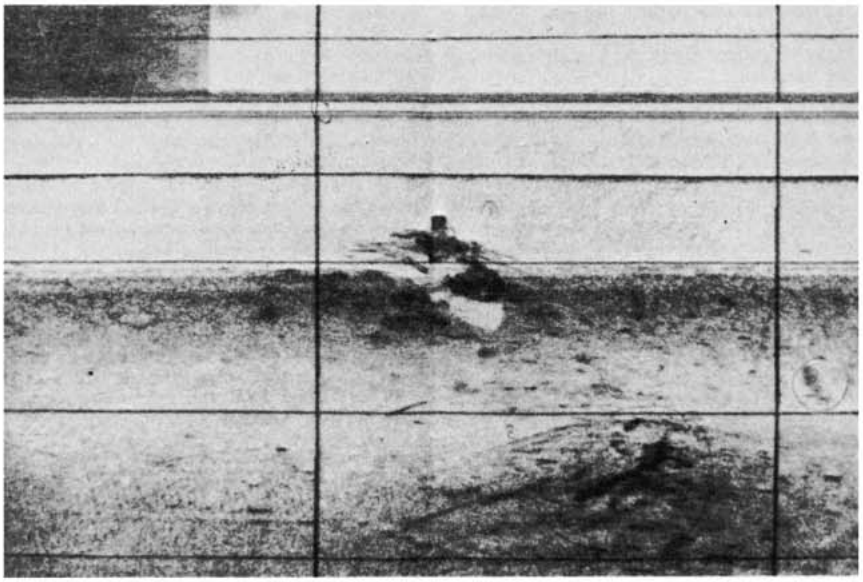
Bearing witness to the ingenuity of the German Naval engineers, we located two of the massive caissons which had been constructed on site and fitted to the underside of *Tirpitz* to facilitate repairs following the X-craft attack. These had simply been dumped on the seabed when repairs were complete. A tug and a small merchantman were also located, together with six smaller craft, bearing testimony to the hasty German retreat in November, 1944, and all showed evidence of having been sunk by scuttling charges.

At times, in unbearable weather and very cold seas, we worked around the clock on a twelve-hour diving schedule to clear the large number of anomalies now building up. Diving regularly to forty/fifty-five metres in the very cold and, at times, low visibility sea, our team experienced four cases of narcosis which caused some concern.

Our three week stay at Kaafjord was coming to an end and still nothing resembling an X-craft had been found in the fjord. We were beginning to wonder if our searching was in vain. With very little time remaining our geophysicist, Nigel Kelland, undertook a reappraisal of our search technique results and listed eight anomalies already checked but in need of further inspection.

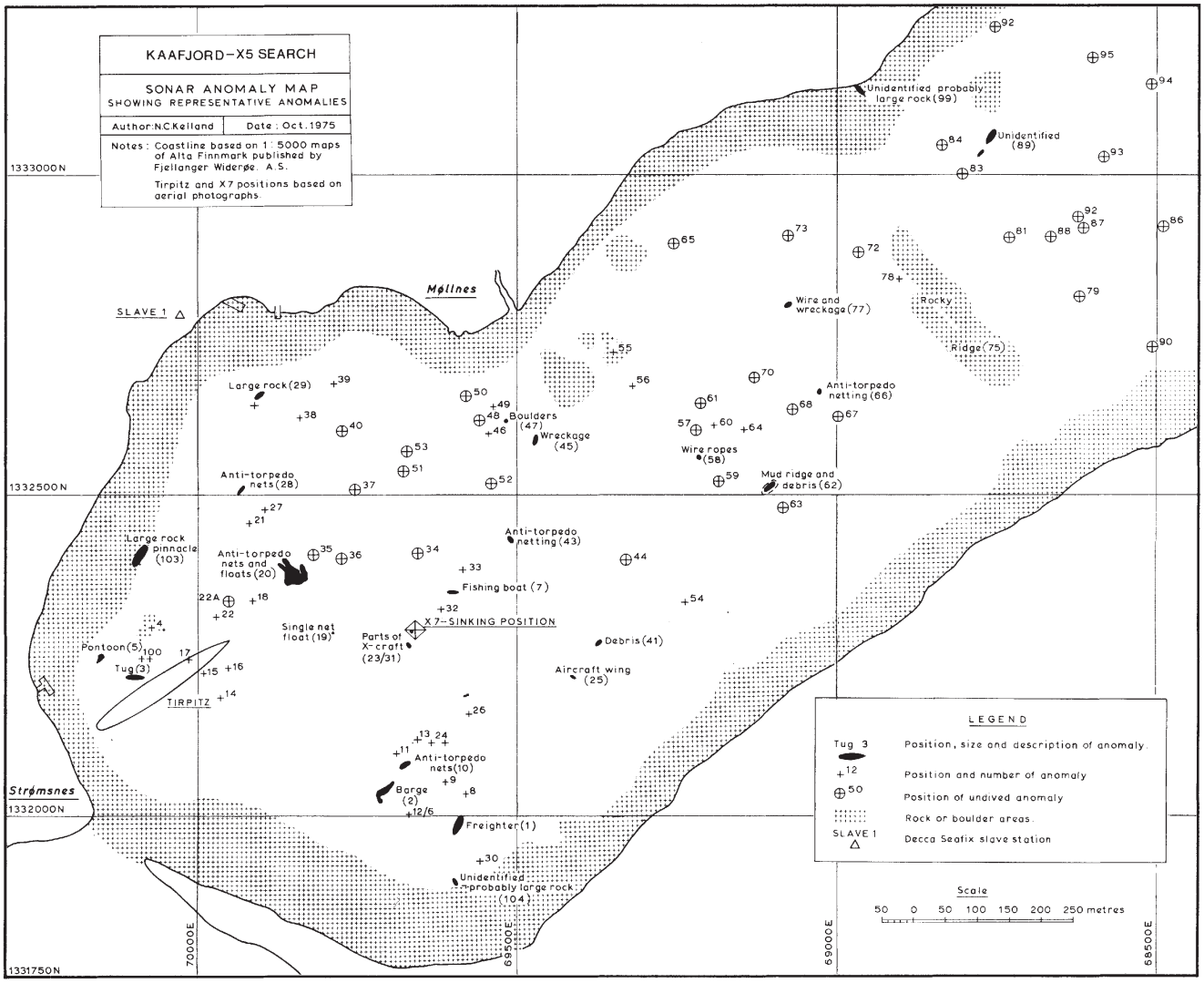
On Tuesday, July 9, 1974, at 11.25 a.m. a pair of divers, Tony Rodgers and our Australian diver, Lindsey Coles, dived again on anomaly No. 23. On surfacing they reported that this wreckage appeared to be part of a submarine. After close study of the X-craft photographs, further dives confirmed that this was the entire bow section of an X-craft, upside down in thirty centimetres of mud at a depth of forty-two metres.

Peter Cornish, right, helps set up the northernmost Decca Sea-Fix navigational station just beside the spot where the Scharnhorst was anchored at the top of Kaafjord.



A photograph showing a typical 'acoustic map' of the bed of the fjord, obtained from the EG and G dual channel, side-scanning sonar, showing, in this case, the wreck of a large freighter (Anomaly 1) at a depth of 140ft.

Nigel Kelland, expedition geophysicist, operating the Sea-Fix and sonar equipment on board the survey boat.



Much closer scrutiny was now given to the other anomalies in the vicinity of No. 23 and it was quickly found that No. 31 was the shattered remains of the pressure hull of an X-craft. It was relevant that the area where these anomalies were located was more or less equidistant between the spot the gunnery target was sited and where *X5* was shelled. A communique was issued to the Press stating that we had located the shattered wreckage of an X-craft but at that time we were unable to positively identify the vessel. Other wreckage was in existence nearby but closer inspection of this localised material was not possible due to the heavy diving workload over the last few days.

Meanwhile, an urgent telegram was sent to the Admiralty in London requesting permission to recover the bow section for photographic and identification purposes. We had specifically undertaken not to touch any wreckage located but, nevertheless, early on Thursday, July 11, permission was granted, through the Imperial War Museum. At 2.00 p.m. on that day, the momentous occasion came when the five-ton J. W. Automarine lifting bag burst through the surface, with the three-metre long, two-ton bow section, suspended below it. The whole assembly was then anchored to anomaly No. 31 to prevent it drifting away, whilst we allowed the outgoing tide to clear away the thirty years of muddy deposit pouring out of the shattered bow. Close visual and photographic inspection clearly showed it to be the bow section of an X-craft, free-flooding holes and No. 1 main vent valve being definitely identified. The following morning the bag was deflated and the wreckage was gently lowered to the seabed.

The bow section, shattered by depth charges, is partially raised for inspection and photography on July 11, 1974 after lying on the bed of the fjord for thirty-one years.

OPERATION SOURCE

Operational Crew of X5

Lieutenant H. Henty-Creer, RNVR, Missing. Panel 80, Column 1.
Sub-Lieutenant A. D. Malcolm, RNVR, Missing. Panel 80, Column 1.
Sub-Lieutenant T. J. Nelson, RNVR, Missing. Panel 80, Column 1.
ERA4 R. J. Mortiboys, RN, Missing. Panel 77, Column 2.
All commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Date of death given as October 3, 1943—eleven days after the operation.

Operational Crew of X6

Lieutenant D. Cameron, RNR, Captured.
Sub-Lieutenant J. T. Lorimer, RNVR, Captured.
Sub-Lieutenant R. H. Kendall, RNVR, Captured.
ERA4 E. Goddard, RN, Captured

Operational Crew of X7

Lieutenant B. C. G. Place, RN, Captured.
Sub-Lieutenant R. Aitken, RNVR, Captured.
Lieutenant L. B. Whittam, RNVR. Body recovered October 4, 1943 by Germans from inside *X7* and buried by them in Alta cemetery. Removed at the end of the war to Tromso Military Cemetery, Plot Nn, Row D, Grave 8.

Lieutenant Whittam's grave, in Tromso Military Cemetery, is the only one to be seen today out of the nine men who lost their lives on Operation Source. Note the date of death given is that when the Germans recovered the body.

Operational Crew of X7—Cont.

ERA4 W. M. Whitley, RN. Body recovered by Germans but buried as unidentified. Grave location now lost and commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 81, Column 2. Date of death recorded as September 22, 1943.

Passage Crew of X9

Sub-Lieutenant E. Kearon, RNVR, Missing. Panel 80, Column 1, Portsmouth Memorial.
Able Seaman H. A. Harte, RN, Missing. Panel 69, Column 1, Chatham Memorial.
Stoker 1 G. H. Hollett, RN, Missing. Panel 82, Column 1, Plymouth Memorial.
The three members of the passage crew to Norway died when the tow parted and *X9* sank sometime between 0145 and 0300 on September 16, 1943. The date of death is incorrectly recorded as October 3, 1943.

Operational Crew of X10

Lieutenant K. R. Hudspeth, RANVR.
Sub-Lieutenant B. E. Enzer, RN.
Sub-Lieutenant G. G. Harding, RNVR.
ERA4 L. Tilley, RN.
All returned safely to base.

Note: *X8* never committed to action. Scuttled on voyage to Norway, without loss of life.

We received visits from the relatives of two of the crew members of *HMS X5* during the stay at Kaafjord and this brought home to the members the human element of the search. We were also visited by an Australian, an American, a South African and five Norwegian divers which gave our expedition a truly international flavour.

Time had now run out and there was a hectic rush to carefully restore the camp site, stow the equipment being shipped from Alta, and catch a plane. It was a very tired contingent that eventually arrived in London on July 14, 1974.

In some respects the expedition produced more questions than answers. Had we located the *X5* or *X7*? The wreckage found was midway between the last reported positions of the two submarines. Although nothing had been found of the *X6*, which it had been surmised would have been blasted to unrecognizable wreckage by its charges, surely some significant wreckage would be found of the *X5*?

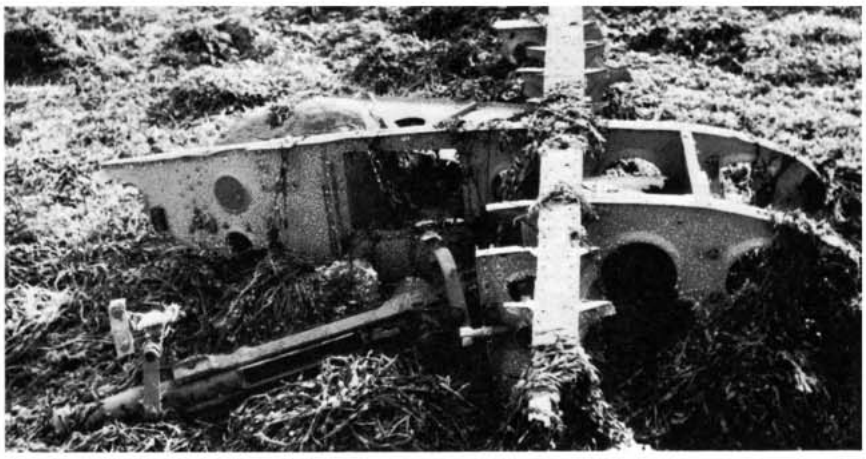
Considerable historical and technical research continued in Norway, Britain, and West Germany as the available data was analysed in light of the expedition's findings. A comprehensive sonar anomaly map and a navigational plot were produced and, when these were compared with World War II intelligence reports and air reconnaissance photos, it became apparent that the wreckage located at Anomalies 23 and 31 was from *X7* and not *X5*. This supposition was supported by the fact that *X7* was located on September 27, 1943 at 9.30 a.m. by *Arngast* at a position 350 metres, 40 degrees from *Tirpitz*. Subsequently, this was recovered on October 1, 1943, and found to have an estimated 5.5 metre length of bow missing.

The whereabouts of the *X5* still remained undetermined, although it was recognized that she could have been hidden from the electronic search along the sides of the fjord and other rocky areas. Plans were therefore made to return to Norway to continue the search and to recover the pieces of X-craft found for more detailed inspection. However, despite the considerable interest that was created, especially by the extensive coverage from the British and European news media, the intended return visit was not economically possible the following year and the second expedition had to be postponed a year.

The 1976 expedition was an even larger undertaking than the preceding one. Twenty-four British divers were selected from among the participants in the first expedition and from BSAC volunteers around the UK. These were augmented with divers from Norway, Canada, and the USA who continued to maintain the international involvement in the expedition. In addition, a 10-man contingent from the British Army's Royal Engineers, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Graham Owens, joined the project. The REs, who had just participated in a NATO exercise, journeyed overland in convoy and brought a one-man portable recompression chamber with them.

The necessary logistical support for the project came again from many sources. The equipment loaned included Decca Hi-Fix from Decca Surveys Ltd., E. G. & G. side-scanning sonar from Bliksum Ltd., underwater TV and videorecording equipment from Techmation Ltd., and J. W. Automarine lifting bags. Shipping services for a container to and from Alta, Norway were provided by Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab. Extensive documentation with still and motion picture photography was planned with professional expertise. As before, Dr. Joan Lamb was the expedition's diving medical officer, to provide emergency and intensive care facilities against any contingency.

The 25-day operation began on July 26 when the members left London for Alta via Oslo by air. Camp was pitched on the same site overlooking the Tirpitz anchorage. On this occasion there were numerous small personal tents to augment the six, large service tents used to house the expedition's essential facilities and provide the dormitory accommodation. Once the camp was established, survey operations commenced again under the direction of Nigel Kelland. The Hi-Fix navigational chain — similar in concept to the Sea-Fix used on the previous expedition — permitted the survey vessel to position itself and plot with great accuracy. To visually guide the Norwegian skipper of the hired fishing boat, transit range markers were carefully set up along the west and south sides of the fjord. The side-scanning sonar was



Machine gun in the Arado Ar 196 wing section found lying on the foreshore close to the campsite. This single-engined floatplane was used by all the major German warships.

towed on lines 150 metres apart which gave a greater overlap than on the previous expedition and permitted more accurate interpretation of the trace.

Diving operations started the second day with familiarisation and acclimatisation dives on a sunken cargo ship and it was here the expedition's only serious accident occurred — with the very first pair of divers! The two experienced divers, using variable volume dry suits, descended to 125 feet in good visibility. One of the divers experienced 'shortness of breath' and after a short period commenced an emergency ascent. Buddy breathing was initiated but in the shallower depths a blow up occurred and the diver hit the surface experiencing an explosive decompression. The Medical Officer was on scene and rendered emergency treatment. She revived the victim and then provided him with intensive care at the camp. When the patient's condition had sufficiently stabilized, he was evacuated to Tromso by low-flying aircraft. It is believed that the young man suffered a simple mediastinal emphysema. Remarkably, he made such a rapid recovery that within a week he was permitted to return to the camp under the doctor's observation. Upon inspecting the regulator that he had used, some corrosion was found in the first stage filter.

Diving ops resumed upon the return of the MO. Four tasks were delineated — namely: an east wall search; *HMS X7* study and recovery; anomaly inspection and the west wall search. The civilian dive teams maintained their diving schedule using the Royal Navy Physiological Laboratory/BSAC 1972 Air Tables, which, it should be pointed out, were especially developed for cold water diving. The Royal Engineers, restricted to various depths according to their divers' certification, followed the RN Diving Manual.

The fjord wall searches were conducted with teams of three. Each team made 30 metre sweeps down the rocky drop off out to the mud bottom where they executed a leapfrog change-over and then made a sweep back to the shore. Each sweep-sector had previously been marked off on the shoreline and the operation was carefully monitored by the Team Leader.

The study and recovery of the *X7* was a complex task that involved considerable preparation and skill in its execution. The first section was of some two tons but the second was deceptive and eventually required over seven tons of lift before it could be towed ashore. The two adjacent parts had been severely damaged by depth charges. They comprised the forward third of the submarine and consisted of the free flooding bow, No. 1 main ballast tank, batteries and storage area, and a portion of the 'wet and dry' chamber. The sections were filled with mud and were carefully excavated to yield hundreds of pieces of batteries, and numerous pieces of equipment including a Sladen diving suit, sextant, small arms, and pages from navigational tables. The small artifacts were carefully sealed for later analysis, preservation, and disposition by the Imperial War Museum.

The anomaly teams checked the objects left over from the earlier expedition and those appraised during the current ops as possibilities. The teams made dives in varying depths and conditions and found a variety of debris and twisted wreckage, together with some intact wrecks. It was not surprising that in such an environment, divers several times thought that they had finally found the missing submarine — only to have their partner or a second team determine that the object was just a pile of chain, a rock, or sometimes even an unexploded depth charge!

Within the first two weeks the east wall search had been completed and good progress had been made on the west wall. However what was confidently expected to be a conspicuous target had not been found. Diving

The 1976 expedition. The battery compartment, weighing about eight tons, is brought to the surface under two 5-ton lifting bags.

Expedition leader, Peter Cornish, beside the recovered bow and battery compartments. These fitted onto the right-hand end of the X7 pictured at the top of page 37.

Above: **This sextant, recovered from X7, was refurbished by Kelvin Hughes** *(right)* **and presented to Rear-Admiral Godfrey Place on March 12, 1977.**

assignments were rotated but the twice daily searches required considerable dedication and effort in the cold and deep dives.

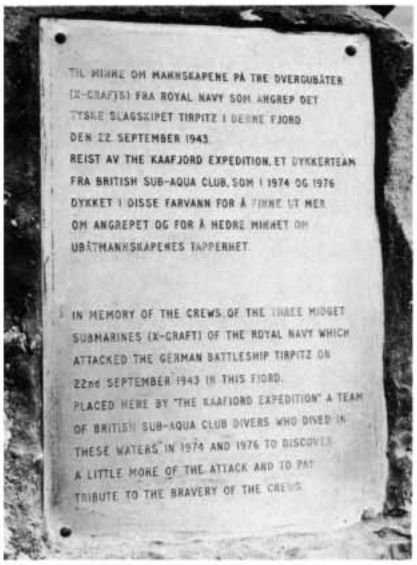
The next areas to be screened were the two rocky ridges in the middle of the fjord. These turned out to be moraine deposits of large boulders. Working at a depth of some 165 feet the expedition's methods and expertise were taxed to complete the task within the no decom limits. After several attempts, in which poor visibility and/or nitrogen narcosis had nullified the efforts, the three-man swim line teams were able to successfully cover the areas delineated by jack stays. Still there was no sign of the *X5*.

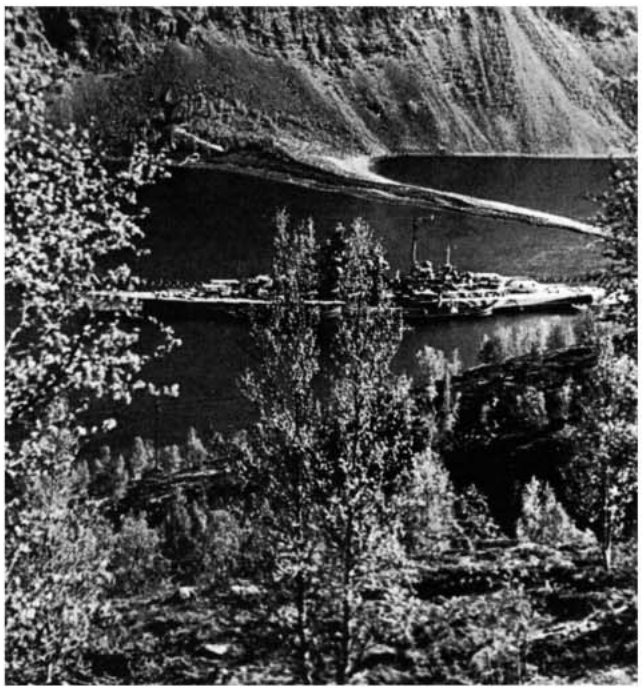
The underwater television and the video recording equipment were also used as a search tool and to monitor progress on the recovery of wreckage. Its immediate playback capability allowed careful analysis of those fleeting moments at depth. Underwater cinematography was conducted throughout the operation to provide a permanent record of the project.

The inner fjord had now been well covered by the electronic search gear and meticulously screened by divers in approximately 500 man dives, when time again ran out. Two sections of *X7* had been recovered together with numerous associated items of equipment including the engine of the Fleet Air Arm Hellcat.

The large artifacts recovered were considered of historical significance and the Imperial War Museum and the RAF Museum at Hendon were interested in preserving these pieces for display. These were transported by the Army, using heavy equipment, to the dock at Alta from where they were shipped to restoration facilities in England.

Although *X5* herself was not located, the general objectives of the project were met. A total of approximately 850 man dives were made during the two expeditions in which time the inner fjord was carefully searched and significant wreckage was recovered. It can be said with confidence that the *X5* is not there and must have escaped — contrary to the official British and German records. As a result, the relatives of the crew of *X5* are now hopeful that the Admiralty will reconsider a posthumous award to the crew.


REIST AV THE KAAFJORD EXPEDITION, ET DYKKERTEAM
FRA BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB, SOM I 1974 OG 1976
DEN 22. SEPTEMBER 1943
IN MEMORY OF THE CREWS OF THE
SUBMARINES (X-CRAFT) OF THE ROYAL NAVY WHICH
ATTACKED THE GERMAN BATTLESHIP TIRPITZ ON
22nd SEPTEMBER 1943 IN THIS FJORD.
PLACED HERE BY "THE KAAFJORD EXPEDITION" A TEAM
OF BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB DIVERS WHO DIVED IN
THESE WATERS IN 1974 AND 1976 TO DISCOVER
A LITTLE MORE OF THE ATTACK AND TO PAY
TRIBUTE TO THE BRAVERY OF THE CREWS



Before the Kaafjord expedition departed in August 1976, a cairn was erected on the shore overlooking the Tirpitz anchorage in memory of the attack on September 22, 1943.

Lieutenant Kenneth More

Ex-Lieutenant Kenneth More as he portrayed Squadron Leader Douglas Bader in 'Reach for the Sky' made in 1956.

Although Kenneth More has played in thirty or more feature films, including the top box-office success of the fifties, 'Genevieve', he freely admits that 'Reach for the Sky' remains his major all-time great.

Portraying the legless Douglas Bader was to be the first of many 'stiff-upper-lip' roles in films such as 'A Night to Remember', 'Sink the Bismark', 'The Longest Day' and 'Battle of Britain'. The fact that he looks and feels the part of the British Officer so well is probably due, in no small part, to the six years he spent in the Royal Navy during the Second World War.

On the outbreak of war in September 1939, it was only natural for Kenneth More, then a struggling actor in Wolverhampton, to want to join the Royal Navy. His father, Lieutenant Gilbert More, had served as one of the earliest pilots in the Royal Naval Air Service in the First World War, and Kenneth, then twenty-five years old, was anxious to follow in his father's footsteps.

The moment war was declared, he went straight to the nearest recruiting office, only to be told briskly that they had more than enough men already.

Kenneth recalls that, utterly deflated, he returned to the theatre just in time to see the 'Closed' notices going up. Alongside was a notice for Air Raid Precautions. On impulse, he went to the nearest ARP recruiting centre and signed on. At least he felt he was in something.

His recollections of the 'phoney war' days were of passing endless hours wrapping yards of bandages around imaginary broken legs and arms. To begin with, he says, they had plenty of volunteer victims but they soon got fed up with it and they then had to practise on themselves.

Then, during the Spring of 1940, as a result of his attempt to volunteer for the Navy, he got a letter asking if he was interested in joining D.E.M.S.—Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships. Because of the German U-boats, guns were being fitted to merchant ships, and each gun had a naval gunnery rating in charge, with his team drawn from among the crew.

Kenneth says that he had become so bored with bandages and splints, and loafing around waiting for bombs which never came, that the prospect of D.E.M.S. seemed a blessed relief. He filled in the necessary forms, sent them off and watched the post with tension and excitement.

A few weeks later he was in barracks at *HMS Victory,* Portsmouth, doing square-bashing before going on a gunnery course.

Ordinary Seaman More was then posted to Tiger Bay, Cardiff, where he was taught to fire and maintain a very old four-inch gun. By this time he was beginning to enjoy the Navy and, to use Naval terminology, 'discontinued shaving'—he grew a beard.

At the end of his training, Able Seaman More, as he then was, was assigned to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company ship, *MV Lobos,* bound for the west coast of South America with a cargo of textiles. As it was May 1940, just before the fall of France, and they would have to pass through the Southern Irish Sea, reputedly thick with U-boats, the voyage didn't promise to be a pleasure cruise.

He boarded the *Lobos* at Liverpool, and after four days sailing the convoy reached the southern part of the Irish Channel where the escort ships were to leave and German submarines were expected to arrive.

'That night, sure enough, trouble came. About a mile astern of us the tanker *Athelaird* was hit. Enormous flames pillared up into the sky. I felt scared.

'I called the gun team out on deck for action stations. The *Lobos* was completely blacked out, so in the darkness they all tripped over each other in the best slapstick manner with the richest of Liverpudlian curses. As we groped our way to the gun platform the lookout got more and more excited, peering round and reporting U-boats left, right and centre. According to him, the sea was so crawling with them that I wouldn't have been at all surprised if one had climbed up the side of the ship.

'When I had finally got the team together beside the gun, the bosun was struggling at the breech. He was doing extremely well in his efforts to load the gun, I thought—the only fault being that he was trying to push the shell, which was live, into the breech the wrong way round.

'All through that cold, wet, shivering night we waited for a situation when we would have to fire. We were quite resigned to being torpedoed. The *Lobos* was diesel-driven, and despite all the blackout precautions, a huge shower of sparks billowed from her funnel, making our position as clear to the Germans as if we were firing rockets. Also, we had a top speed of only ten knots, whereas a U-boat, surfaced in the darkness, could make seventeen.

'However, when dawn broke, to our utter

Able-Seaman More pictured in Valparaiso in Chile in 1940 after his voyage there in the MV Lobos.

surprise, we were still alive. I dismissed the crew and set about tidying things up by getting the shell out of the breech. I tried several times, but it wouldn't budge. It was stuck fast. I used the extractor—a cup-like gadget that fitted over the end of the shell—but that didn't work either.

'Then I saw the bosun. Bless me if he wasn't standing at the opposite end of the barrel with his hands out, waiting to catch the shell as if it were a cricket ball.

'The captain said the only way to remove it was to fire it out, so everything was got ready. The breech was closed, the team stood by, and the bosun crouched down beside the gun with his eyes shut tight and his fingers in both ears.

'I gave the order: "Fire!"

'There was a dreadful roar, then a splash as the shell landed in the water several hundred yards away. After that, we felt more confident in our defences.'

While leaving Bermuda, the *Lobos* sustained damage to her side when the ship collided with a boom in the harbour, but the ship was headed for Cuba regardless, planning to put in for repairs later.

'When we reached the entrance of the Panama Canal,' recalls Kenneth, 'U.S. guards swarmed aboard. The Americans were not yet in the war, but they were highly suspicious of every ship passing through the canal in case Japanese saboteurs were on board. The guards examined and picked over the little *Lobos* as thoroughly as an agent reading the small print in an actor's contract, and did not leave us until we got to the Pacific.

'We nosed down the American coast, calling at fifty-two different ports on our way to our chief destination—Valparaiso in Chile. By now, the damage the ship had suffered at Bermuda wasn't looking too good. Repairs were needed urgently, so when we reached the port named Talcahuano, it was decided to have them done at once.

'We weren't pleased at being told that this would take nine whole weeks. That length of time in Chile was hardly my idea of Paradise. In addition, the crew were feeling low because none of them had received any mail from home. The German-controlled local papers were full of the horror of the bombing in Britain, and when the men read about Liverpool and other cities being wiped out their anxiety grew. After a while, I went along to the British Consul in civvies as, because Chile was neutral, if I had gone ashore in naval uniform I would have been interned. He assured me that the newspaper reports were nonsense and gave me some accurate, and much more reassuring news to take back to the ship.

'We at last got to Valparaiso, where our main delight was in baiting the Germans we met. The town was packed with Nazi sailors on account of one of our battleships prowling around nearby. The Jerries didn't dare venture out.

Finally the homeward trip began, the *Lobos* now loaded with iron ore and guano. After passing through the Panama Canal, the *Lobos* made for the Caribbean where she joined convoy HX84 bound for Halifax—a convoy of thirty-eight merchant ships all told.

The fireworks really began on November 5, 1940 when the German pocket-battleship *Admiral Scheer* attacked the convoy. The ships scattered and the *Lobos* managed to escape under a smoke screen. However, five ships were lost, including the armed merchant cruiser *Jervis Bay,* which bravely tackled the German battleship, drawing her fire.

Back in England, after a welcome leave, Able Seaman More reported to Portsmouth Naval Barracks; his application for a commission had been accepted. Then early in January 1941, he was sent to Lancing College in Sussex for five weeks training. He then went to *HMS King Alfred*—the Hove Corporation swimming baths on the sea front—and became one of the 22,500 RNVR officers who trained there during the war. He emerged as Temporary Acting Sub-Lieutenant Kenneth More, RNVR.

Certain he would now be posted to an active naval vessel, he was dismayed to learn that because his Merchant Navy experience was considered so valuable, he was to be assigned

At Naples in 1943 on board HMS Aurora.

to train Merchant Navy officers in anti-aircraft gunnery.

He returned to Liverpool with a dreadful feeling of anti-climax.

'However, I didn't let the matter rest,' recalls Sub-Lieutenant More. 'I pestered the Admiralty with applications for a transfer. Yet it didn't get me anywhere; apparently I was shore-based for the duration. I struck up a friendship with a chief petty officer. He, poor chap, had to listen to my moans:

"Listen," he said confidentially. "The only way to get out of your job is to be ill."

I scoffed. "Me, ill? No use, old chap, I'm too healthy."

"You could fake it," he said.

I was all ears.

"What about appendicitis?" he went on, "Who's to know if you've *really* got it? Look up the symptoms in a book before you see the M.O. It's worth trying. And after sick leave they'll reassign you as a matter of form."

I thought the idea over for a few minutes. "Suppose they believe me and take the appendix out?" I asked.

"So what?" he said.

'The following day I dug out a medical book and swotted up the bits on appendicitis — symptoms, pains; the lot. I even felt I could have a shot at performing the operation. Then I waited until there were plenty of people around.

'I suddenly began yelping and writhed and twisted, holding my tummy. Before long, a sympathetic medical orderly whisked me in to the M.O. I had the next bit off pat. I complained of feeling sick and of a continuous nagging pain that only stopped when I lay down and drew up my right leg. The M.O. prodded me just where my appendix was and I shouted hard.

'He finished his examination and looked at me seriously. "It seems that you've got appendicitis," he announced.

'Thinking to myself that if it hadn't seemed like appendicitis I wasn't much good as an actor, I was bundled into a brand new naval hospital at Blundell Sands, injected, wheeled into the operating theatre and clamped under an anaesthetic.

'When I woke up, the surgeon stroked his chin. "I've never seen a cleaner appendix," he said, distinctly puzzled.

'The operation was worth it. I got away from Liverpool. In the middle of my sick leave, I applied for a gunnery course on Whale Island, off Portsmouth. I knew that I'd be sent to a ship after that. Unfortunately, the course took much longer than I had expected—it dragged on for three months—and my anxiety to sail on the sea, instead of merely looking at the stuff, grew until I could stick the delay no longer. I went to see my commanding officer. He understood my feelings, and, promising that something would be done, sent me on appointment leave.'

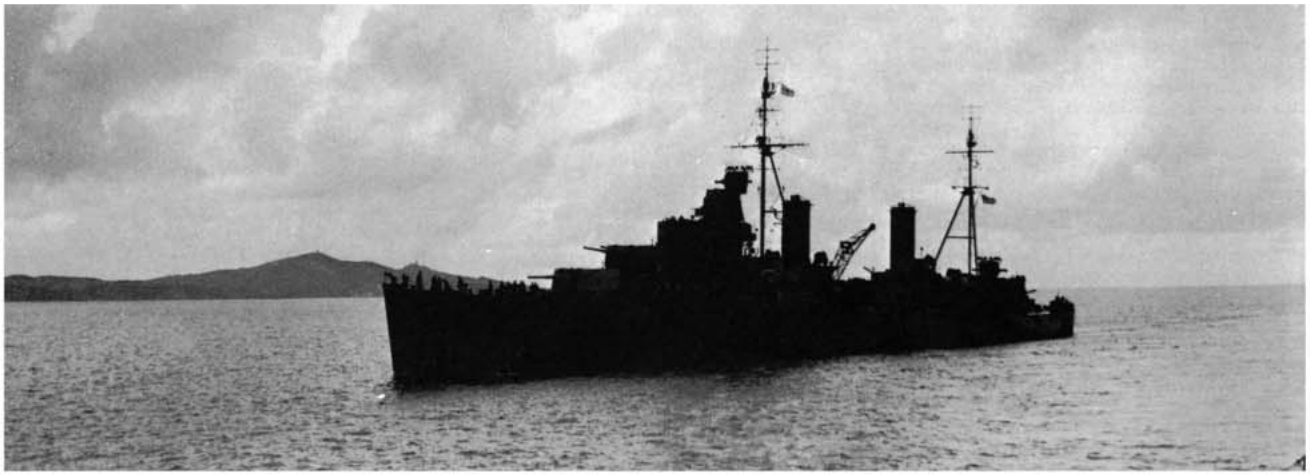
Early in May 1942, the telegram arrived for which he had been waiting. He was ordered to Liverpool to join *HMS Aurora,* one of the Navy's crack light cruisers as a high-angle gunnery officer and with promotion to Lieutenant.

'The *Aurora,* when I saw her, looked superb; sleek, aggressive and altogether magnificent,' says Kenneth More today. 'The officers were a grand bunch, and after their shock at finding I was an actor, they forgave me and we got along together extremely well.

'We sailed down the Mersey on July 4 and went up past the north of Ireland to act as an escort for some minelayers. The aim was to block the route by which U-boats were sneaking from the North Sea into the Atlantic to get at Allied convoys.

'We had a memorable time. Icebergs were about, making me think of the *Titanic;* also, a thick fog settled down. Nevertheless, we belted along at fifteen knots in tight formation. It was cold and decidely dodgy —especially when the mines were being chucked overboard. One in ten of the blasted things exploded, breaking the eerie silence with a most awful, shattering bang.

'Everyone was relieved when we turned south to be senior escort vessel to a convoy which was assembling off Land's End. It was bound for North Africa with reinforcements—many of them Cameron High-



HMS Aurora, built at a cost of £1,252,915 and launched on August 20, 1936, enters Bône Harbour just before Christmas 1942. On board Lieutenant Kenneth More (IWM).

landers and other Scottish troops—for General Montgomery, who was getting ready for El Alamein. The convoy's route to the Middle East was via the Cape, but we were only going part of the way, to Freetown in Sierra Leone, on the west coast of Africa.

'The hotter the weather became, the more clothes we took off. But when Captain Agnew spotted some of us at action stations in shorts he promptly sent out a reminder that our bodies had to be completely covered. The idea was to have protection against the flash-burn from the guns: men in the River Plate battle who hadn't taken this precaution were said to have suffered the most fearful injuries.

'All the same, there wasn't a sign of the enemy anywhere, and the sun was so scorching that we argued.

'Finally in desperation the captain said: "I don't care what you wear, but you've got to wear something. Wear pyjamas if you like!"

'And that is why Lieutenant More became the only naval officer ever to turn up for normal duty in blue striped flannel.'

Lieutenant More recalls with horror his next clash with the Captain:

'I happened to be on the bridge when an order came from the convoy commodore's ship to follow Zig-zag 11. This was one of the patterns used by convoys to fool any lurking U-boats. The patterns were listed in a book, and when the order came through to follow one, each ship looked it up. In this way, the convoy was able to weave about merrily with all ships keeping station.

'Zig-zag 11 required the *Aurora* to follow a certain bearing for ten minutes, then alter course to another bearing, and so on. Captain Agnew, at that moment, was having a well-earned cat-nap on the bridge and I wondered whether I ought to rouse him. Eventually I decided it was up to me to cope with the situation; that was my job.

'I gave the necessary orders, and the to-ing and fro-ing started off all right. Everything seemed to be going splendidly. I was feeling very much the master of the situation when I heard a desperate shout: "The wheel's to port instead of staboard!"

'Instantly, Captain Agnew was on his feet. I stared at him, panic-striken.

"You're heading for the commodore's ship!" he roared.

'The commodore's ship had appeared out of the spray and we were speeding straight at her, about to slice her in half. Only by expert seamanship from Captain Agnew was a truly disastrous collision avoided.

'Flags rippled up the commodore's mast. The signal demanded: *Name of the officer of the watch.*

'I was for it. I looked at Captain Agnew. He had gone a bit red. Technically, the near-accident was his fault; the *Aurora* was his ship. At once he sent back a signal. *My responsibility. Officer of the watch under training.*

'He gave me a proper wigging later on, of course, but I was able to breathe again. And I understood more fully why he had the respect of all the chaps who served under him!

After a two weeks stay at Freetown, the *Aurora* returned to the Mediterranean to join Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa in November 1942. Lieutenant More was control officer in charge of the 4-inch anti-aircraft guns as they started to patrol outside Oran. Their job was to support the landings and stop any of the French warships in the harbour from escaping.

'At dawn a big French destroyer of the Aigle class, her battle ensign at full top, steamed proudly out of the harbour, obviously determined to make a dash for it,' says Kenneth. 'We didn't want to fight the French, but had our orders. We went after her. Twenty minutes later the French captain decided that he'd had enough. He beached his ship, a pathetic wreck burning furiously.

'It made an unforgettable introduction to the swiftness, noise, tenseness and savagery of a naval action. Even though many of the shells were hair-raisingly close, I found to my surprise that I wasn't scared. I was too busy. Also, we weren't hit, and I had no real idea of the horror it would involve. That was an experience yet to come.

'The sea around us swarmed with enemy submarines. At least twenty-five torpedoes were fired at us, but we dodged them all.

'At 11 a.m. two more French destroyers tried to escape. One of them was a large four-funnelled job; the other rather smaller. At once another life and death fight broke out. Bursting shells spouted up in fountains from the water. The Frenchmen had the ingenious trick of colouring their bursts with green dye in order to pick them out. Two shells straddled us neatly.

'But the *Aurora* could do at least 29 knots. Captain Agnew swung her sharply out of the way. When the shell came whistling down it very nearly scraped the paint from the stern, twenty yards from the control platform.

'With the help of a British destroyer, the *Boadicea,* we knocked out the smaller French ship. The larger one fled for cover behind a promontory of rock, pulling down an enormous umbrella of thick black smoke over her. And that took care of the naval opposition at Oran.'

The *Aurora* then became the flagship of the 12th cruiser squadron, under Rear-Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt. Known as Force Q, the squadron consisted of the *Aurora,* two other cruisers, the *Sirius* and *Argonaut,* and a couple of destroyers, the *Quiberon* and *Quentin.* The task was to disrupt Rommel's supply lines between Sicily and Tripoli.

Kenneth More obtained promotion to Captain when he played Director of Naval Operations at the Admiralty (named Sheppard in the film but Edwards in reality) in 'Sink the Bismarck' made in 1960.

On the night of December 1/2, they caught two German destroyers and four merchant ships, and in a chaotic fight wiped out the lot.

'The Germans were determined to get us after that', recalls Kenneth. 'When we were in Bône, our advance base, they dive-bombed us and mined the harbour entrance. The *Orion* sailed from England as reinforcement. She managed to get into Bône, but hadn't been there twenty-four hours before she suffered a direct hit in the engine room and was out of it.

'Every night the harbour was ablaze with burning oil tankers. And every ship in the harbour was hit except ours.

'During one raid, my anti-aircraft guns shot down a plane which turned out to be an RAF Beaufighter. But the pilot was very decent about it. He parachuted to safety and afterwards called to thank us for getting him a month's leave.

Shortly afterwards, after a particularly hectic night's action, Captain Agnew strode vigorously on deck, taking his constitutional. There he met the ship's doctor, Lieutenant-Commander Sam Balfour, R.N.V.R.

'Did you enjoy the party, Sam?' asked the captain.

'Well,' the doctor admitted, 'where I was below decks I hadn't a clue as to what was happening. The ship could have been hit for all I knew.'

This set Captain Agnew thinking. There was nothing more demoralizing than having to stay down inside a ship during a battle, listening to the noise and trying to imagine what was happening above.

The result of the conversation was that Lieutenant More (perhaps because of the suspect accuracy of his shooting, or because of his acting experience) got a new, unique assignment. He was taken off the AA guns, handed a microphone connected to the loudspeaker system and posted on the lower bridge. There his job was to give a running commentary to the entire crew on all that went on.

His efforts were such a success that the engine room complained that stokers were crowding round their loudspeaker instead of working. He threw in a salty phrase or two and the general improvement in morale was so marked that several other ships soon copied the idea.

Kenneth More recalls that he was completely honest in his commentaries and didn't try to hide the facts. For example, he'd say, 'There are twelve torpedo bombers coming in on the port beam. We've not opened fire yet. Now we have. We've hit one. We've hit two. They've dropped their torpedoes. The captain's taking avoiding action,' and so on. He says that the trouble was that although he was often thoroughly frightened, standing around with nothing but a tin hat and a mike, he didn't dare let it show in his voice. Outwardly, he had to keep calm, with the stiffest of upper lips.

Furthermore, he had to watch his language. Once, the ship put in at Algiers. In the evening, German torpedo bombers arrived from Marseilles and started a raid. Having gone ashore, Lieutenant More, full of fight and red vino, sprinted to the docks, staggered aboard and took up his action station. By then, the raid was in full swing. Smoke was everywhere. All the ships in the harbour were firing.

One of them erred in its aim and he shouted cheerfully: 'Would you believe it! Some silly bastard's shot down a barrage balloon!'

'I had forgotten we were in harbour. My words came out through the upper deck loudspeakers. Greatly amplified they echoed round Algiers. I got a fearful rocket for that.'

On Christmas Day 1942 in Bône Harbour, once again the actor, Lieutenant More organised a ship's concert party with the name 'The Silver Phantoms', after the Italian nickname for the *Aurora*.

On June 7, 1943, *HMS Aurora* had important visitors—Admiral Cunningham and General Eisenhower. The *Aurora* was to act as their grandstand for the preliminary bombardment of Pantelleria, the Axis naval island base.

Skylarking with a fellow officer in Taranto, Christmas 1943.

The *Aurora* opened fire on Pantelleria at ten-thirty the following morning. Soon the island was wrapped in smoke. Rocket barrage ships, in use for the first time, opened up. Then a hundred Flying Fortresses went in. It seemed impossible that anything could survive such an onslaught. Kenneth More recalls that the ship was shaken by the blast, even though they were three miles out to sea. He says that Eisenhower got tremendously excited and kept on wanting to go in closer, but that the skipper had enough worries without the risk of an Allied general and admiral getting killed or captured.

After Pantelleria, the *Aurora* raised full steam and supported the naval group that bombarded another island, Lampedusa. Then the ship returned to Algiers.

Next came a really big assignment. The *Aurora* was chosen to pick up King George VI at Tripoli and take him on a visit to Malta. His Majesty was well known as a stickler for having everything spick and span and, for days before he arrived at Tripoli, More remembers that they polished and scrubbed until the ship positively sparkled.

When the King had been piped aboard with his retinue, he chatted to each officer in the mess about their Service careers. Lieutenant More recalls that the crossing to Malta, made in darkness, was a terrible worry for Captain Agnew. Enemy aircraft were still prowling about and, at one time, they were ordered to open fire at suspected torpedo bombers. Every possible precaution was taken including an escort of six destroyers whilst night-fighters flew overhead.

'Sunday, June 20, 1943 was a morning never to be forgotten', says More. 'We sailed into Grand Harbour, Valletta. The steep white houses gleamed in the sun. Thousands of Maltese, overjoyed at the end of their siege, sang the National Anthem, their voices floating across the water. The Royal Standard fluttered at our main and the King, in full whites, stood on a special saluting platform, just forward of the bridge. Lord Gort, the Governor of the island, came aboard and the King went ashore for a triumphal tour of inspection.'

Soon the *Aurora* was taking part in the softening-up operations that preceded the landings in Sicily and on the Italian mainland. Slipping in at night, usually without an escort, they would pound away at oil dumps and other targets on the coastline.

The *Aurora* let loose a broadside on Catania in Sicily at 1.15 a.m. on July 10, 1943, thus claiming the honour of firing the first shells in the return of the liberating Allies to Europe. After which came the forcing of the narrow enemy-held Straits of Messina. Then eventually they returned to Bizerta, where More remembers they played water polo and had wonderful bathing alongside the ship. 'The Silver Phantoms' came to life, gave two shows aboard and went ashore to play to 3,000 Americans.

After Salerno, where the ship engaged an enemy column on the shore and achieved the no mean feat of knocking out seven armoured cars with only nine rounds, it went into dry dock at Malta. There, for some extraordinary reason which baffled everyone, they were constantly bombed but never hit.

When the *Aurora* finally left Grand Harbour on October 4, she sailed east to take troops and supplies from Alexandria, through the Aegean to the islands of Cos and Leros. The Germans had considerable bomber forces on Rhodes and the neighbouring islands and nine ships had already been lost in ten days. Now it was the turn of the *Aurora* to run the gauntlet.

Three trips were successfully accomplished from the combat area and back. On the fourth trip, on October 30, 1943, the ship was creeping past Rhodes at dusk when Junkers 87 dive-bombers were seen approaching.

Lieutenant More remembers to this day how their hearts sank as the look-out counted the approaching aircraft one by one. He stopped at thirteen Stukas, escorted by additional Messerschmitts—they only had the protection of one Beaufighter. The Germans soon disposed of the latter and then turned their attention to the ship.

'They circled round us like birds of prey, then swooped, one by one,' says More. 'Our 6-inch didn't touch any of the first three, and it was hardly surprising; those guns weren't intended as ack-ack. But the shooting of our 4-inch gunners was off. They were unable to do any better.

'The fourth plane dived. I looked up and, to my horror, saw a whacking great thousand-pound bomb, the size of a mattress, falling down straight on top of us.

'Standing beside me was a Paramount Newsreel cameraman, an intrepid little chap with glasses named Hardy. He had joined us

Burial at sea the day after the Aurora was attacked. Lieutenant More stands beside the officer in the dark shirt to the left of the muzzle of the right-hand gun.

at Tripoli, seeing many actions with us, and making sure that *Aurora* got into the newsreels. When we both saw the bomb hurtling down, we flung ourselves on the deck, flat on our faces. The lower bridge was narrow.

"Shove up, chum" I shouted. "Make room for me!"

'Hardy obligingly moved six inches at the instant the bomb landed on the gun deck and exploded. I thought the end of the world had come.

'Another bomb, a near-miss, burst in the water only a few yards from us, on the port beam. A fragment of it sliced through the bridge plating and took a large lump off the top of Hardy's head. His head was exactly where mine would have been if he hadn't moved those inches, but in a few seconds he was back on his feet, taking pictures.

'It was a scene of appalling disaster. The stern of our beautiful ship had been smashed. Locked amid the smoke, flames and tangle of twisted metal were the bodies of forty-three men. As many again were injured.

'Ammunition started to explode. The flames spread. Sixteen more dive-bombers appeared. They circled, about to attack, then seeing that we were crippled, saved their bombs and went after our destroyer escort instead. For us, this was just as well; we had practically no AA defence left.

'The night that followed was the worst in my life. My turn came round to be on watch and I had the dreadful, melancholy job of probing the shattered decks with a torch, retrieving torn-off limbs from corners, and even from the rigging. When I tried to sleep I was haunted by a vivid nightmare—it was to return many, many times in the years to come—in which I relived the entire horrific episode from the moment of looking up and seeing the bomb falling.

'The next day we limped back to Alexandria, burying our dead on the way. At the funeral service I stood bareheaded on deck and kept thinking that becoming the ship's broadcaster was my greatest stroke of good fortune. If I had still been on the gun control platform I would have been killed, as my successor was.

'Italy had signed the Armistice by now, and the *Aurora* went to Taranto, the Italian naval base, for the major repairs that she needed. This was a time of change for the cruiser. Bill Agnew, who had reached the rank of commodore by then, left us and Geoffrey Barnard, today Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Barnard, came out and took over as captain. Agnew, in the time he commanded the *Aurora,* had been responsible, in whole or in part, for the sinking of one enemy cruiser, ten destroyers, three minesweepers and armed trawlers, seven landing craft and twenty-one merchant ships; an impressive record.

'Came Christmas 1944, and the usual hilarious celebrations. As on most evenings, I played the piano for the sing-song. I got a blister on my thumb and had to leave the keyboard thirteen times, but what performer can resist an appreciative audience?

'When the festivities were over, the thought occurred to me that I had been with the *Aurora* for nearly two years. In that period almost every member of the ship's company had been relieved and changed except myself. I was about the oldest inhabitant; certainly I seemed to be the only chap who knew which buttons to press.

'Restlessness, the urge to move on too, set in. I was all ears when a friend in the wardroom nudged me confidentially, a pink gin in hand, and said: "Volunteer as a fighter direction officer. You'll be out of here in no time!"

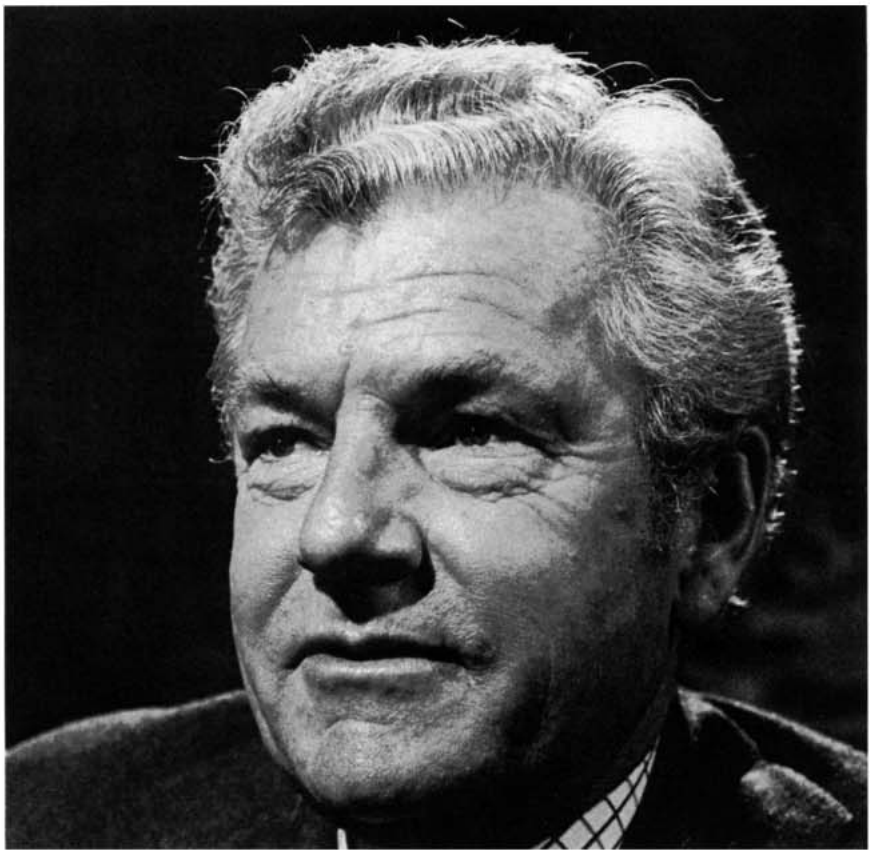
'The idea appealed to me enormously. And, in a flash, I found myself back in England, bundled off to Yeovilton, Somerset, for two months, and at the end of the course, came second. Friends made the slanderous suggestion that I did this by getting to know the Wren in charge of the examination paper printing room. As if I would.

'So, as a fully fledged fighter direction officer with the rank of Lieutenant, I had some leave while awaiting appointment.'

When the posting came, it was for the Pacific and the aircraft carrier *Victorious.* On VE-Day, whilst all his friends were celebrating the end of a war, much to his disgust Lieutenant More was in the troopship *New Amsterdam* in the Red Sea on his way to fight another war.

After three weeks wait at Sydney, Australia, he joined the aircraft carrier as Second Fighter Director Officer, working with the American fleet in the bombardment of Japan.

For the next fifty days they did not sight land as, refuelled at sea, they continually launched bombing attacks against the mainland. More remembers the feeling of relief throughout the ship when news of the Japanese peace offer came through. That night, the wardroom was the location of a wild party as the officers and pilots drank themselves silly. Next morning they were jolted back to normal when the gunnery officer put up a notice stating that 'All brass on guns will now be polished'. They were now in the peace-time Navy and, Kenneth says, 'Polished our way back to England'.



GERMAN POWs IN ENGLAND

Life in German POW Camps, the escapes attempted and accomplished, have appeared in many books and films since the end of World War II. Little, on the other hand, has been published on the English camps for Axis prisoners-of-war, which by the end of the war could be numbered in hundreds.

German and Italian soldiers, sailors and airmen when captured and brought to England would first be passed through one of nine POW cages, one for each command area. A cage was a place for holding prisoners before they were sent to their POW camp. Whilst in the cage, interrogation took place by the Prisoner-of-War Interrogation Section (PWIS) under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel A. P. Scotland, whose personal HQ was situated at the London District Prisoner-of-War cage at No. 8 Kensington Palace Gardens, the requisitioned home of a margarine millionaire.

Race-courses and football grounds were preferred for cages as there was usually plenty of space and good accommodation for prisoners and staff. Doncaster and Kempton Park racecourses were used and Preston North End football ground; other cages in bare fields were set up at Catterick, Yorkshire and Loughborough, Leicestershire. Most prisoners with an unusual history were sent to the London cage and Luftwaffe personnel passed, additionally, through the RAF interrogation centre at Cockfosters.

The interrogation techniques introduced by Lieutenant-Colonel Scotland, and the officers trained by him, were thorough. The only German prisoner to return to Germany during the war, Oberleutnant Franz von Werra *(see After the Battle No. 2)* passed through both the London and Cockfosters interrogation centres. When he reached Germany in April 1941 he was able to give a first-hand account of British methods of questioning — in fact the information he gained from the British was of far greater importance than anything he could have told his interrogators!

Top: **The first German prisoners, from a batch of 364 captured in Normandy, arrive at Kempton Park railway station on June 8, 1944 for screening at No. 9 POW Reception Camp. Photographer Sergeant Wilkes (IWM).** *Above:* **Nowadays, the station is only open on race days for the exclusive use of visitors to the race course.**

Once a prisoner was posted to a POW camp, the interrogation was not, as a rule, carried further. These camps were situated in converted hotels, army barracks, stately homes, colleges and purpose-built camps. To keep numbers down, the old British solution of transportation was revived but, instead of shipping prisoners to Australia they went to the United States and Canada, much against the wishes of the early prisoners who feared death by their own U-boats on the Atlantic crossing.

Within the camps, 'Lagerführers' or camp leaders were appointed and German discipline was still enforced. Difficulties were encountered with the hard-core Nazis and SS who refused to accept defeat lightly and prisoners split into factions which lead to violence in several camps.

Although no German or Italian was successful in escaping from England this does not mean there were not plenty of escape attempts. The nearest escape to succeed was probably that by two Luftwaffe officers, Hauptmann's Wappler and Schnabel, who escaped from Camp No. 15 at Shap Wells Hotel near Penrith in Westmorland. They stole a Miles Magister two-seat trainer aircraft from Kingstown airfield near Carlisle and even landed once to refuel successfully,

Left: **POWs line up to be sorted outside the restaurant (IWM).** *Above:* **Today, the same rose tree still blooms in the foreground.**

convincing the RAF Duty Officer they were Dutch pilots on a training flight. Their luck ran out when they tried to repeat the performance at Horsham St. Faith in Norfolk. However, the Station Commander, Group Captain J. N. D. Anderson, agreed with Squadron Leader Victor Brooks that they 'had put up a jolly good show' and the Germans were entertained well before they were returned to their camp. Another unsuccessful attempt to steal an aircraft to fly to Germany was made in December 1944 at the USAAF base at Warrington in Cheshire.

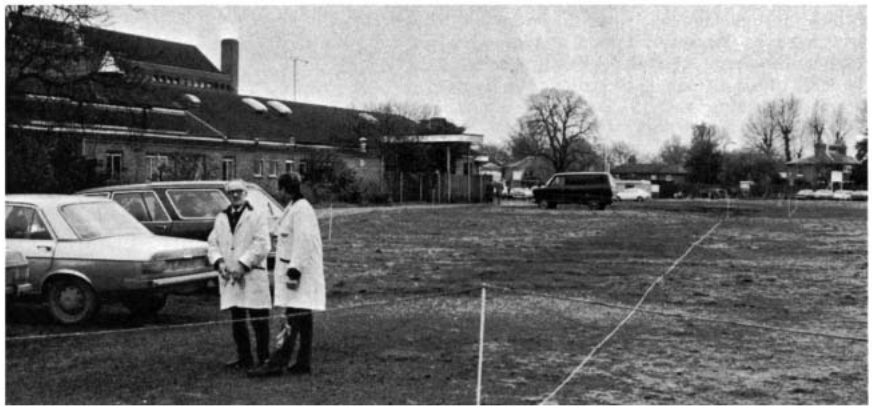
The largest escape took place from Camp No. 112 at Doonfoot at Ayr, Scotland in December 1944 when ninety-seven Italians got out of the camp via a tunnel. All were recaptured within a few days. A more determined mass escape by German prisoners took place on Saturday, March 10, 1945 from No. 11 Island Farm Camp at Bridgend in South Wales. Of the sixty-seven escapees, the last three were not recaptured until a week after the break-out.

Another large escape had been planned three months earlier at Le Marchant Camp at Devizes, Wiltshire, later christened the 'Devizes plot' as the intention of the SS ringleaders had been to seize London! During the summer of 1944, Devizes was used as a reception centre for grading prisoners politically before despatching them to other camps. The camp had seen both British and Polish guards but it was under American control when the Germans prepared to break out simultaneously with prisoners from Lodge Moor Camp at Sheffield. The Germans planned to overpower the guards and release prisoners from other camps. They then intended to raid barracks and equipped with British arms, which they hoped would include armoured vehicles, tanks and aircraft, march on London. The break-out was timed to take place with Hitler's Ardennes offensive as they felt sure that German forces in Europe would soon be invading England.

Fantastic as the plot seems now, the scheme (which was overheard by one of the American guards), was taken seriously; the camp was ringed with tanks and airborne troops and the thirty ringleaders extricated and sent to the London Cage for questioning. After they had been split-up and allocated to other camps, one German, Feldwebel Wolfgang Rosterg, believed by the others to have informed on the Devizes plot, was hung by prisoners on December 23, 1944, at Camp No. 21 at Comrie in Perthshire. Five Germans, Erich Koenig, Jupp Mertens, Kurt Zuelsdorf, Heinz Brueling and Joachim Golitz were subsequently found guilty of murder and hung at Pentonville Prison on October 6, 1945.

Another German, Unteroffizier Gerhardt Rettig, an outspoken critic of the escape plan at the other camp at Lodge Moor, was beaten to death on March 24, 1945 after a bloody chase around the compound. The war was over by the time the two ringleaders, Emil Schmittendorf and Armin Kuehne were executed for the crime at Pentonville on November 16, 1945.

Above: **Once segregated, the POWs marched under escort in batches of fifty back to the railway station (IWM).** *Below:* **Now it's the cars that are lined up in fifties!**



Prisoners were permitted, under the Geneva Convention, to work provided that wages were paid. This was done in many cases to keep the prisoners occupied and so avoid the tensions of close confinement. Usually the work was accepted tolerantly although in July 1944, at Camp No. 22 at Tiverton, Devon, the six hundred and fifty Italians mutinied when twenty-eight prisoners were detailed to unload coal at Exeter railway station. The prisoners claimed it would expose them to danger as an anti-aircraft gun was sited nearby. When the twenty-eight were put in solitary confinement, the whole camp went on strike for their release. The Commandant, Major Monaco, broke the strike in three days by putting the entire camp in detention — the award of Punishment Diet No. 2 was too much for the Italians!

The question of food aroused considerable controversy in Britain during the war as POWs, receiving the equivalent rations of the British Army, were considerably better off than British civilians. The German working prisoner received weekly: 42ozs of meat, 8ozs of bacon, 5½lbs of bread, 10½ozs of margarine as well as vegetables, cheese, cake, jam and tea. (The Italian prisoner had rather more bread and less meat.) The ration was reduced in June 1945 to 14ozs meat, 3ozs bacon and 4ozs margarine but with bread increased to 8lbs and potatoes to 9lbs. Non-working prisoners received less.

POWs were engaged mainly on two kinds of work, firstly agricultural — hedging, ditching and harvesting — and secondly, clearing bomb sites. For the latter, they were paid three shillings for a 48 hour week. These wages, paid in 'token money' to obviate the possibility of this being used for escaping, could be spent at a camp canteen on cigarettes, razor blades and hair oil etc.

In spite of assurances being given that the work done by German prisoners would not result in a single British man being out of work, there was opposition from workmen.

Hundreds of men in London repair gangs went on strike; dockers threatened to walk out when it was planned to use prisoners to reduce a bottleneck in unloading fish supplies, and men in Newcastle volunteered to work two hours extra a day rather than have the assistance of German prisoners.

Officer prisoners, of course, could not be made to work; neither were 'dyed in the wool' Nazis. Only good conduct prisoners were used on farms, sometimes guarded by British soldiers but, more often than not, under the responsibility of the farmer concerned.

Guarding prisoners-of-war was considered by many of the soldiers assigned to the duty as 'cushy' but intensely boring. However the danger of the job was forcibly brought home in July 1943 when a Pioneer Corps guard, Charlie Hands, was killed by an Italian prisoner, Antonio Armedeo, whilst supervising prisoners clearing ditches on a farm in Bedfordshire. The Italian escaped with the guard's rifle but, the following day, came face to face with a nearby farmer who was also armed. Although Armedeo fired first, the farmer's next shots were decisive and the Italian was killed.

The camp pictured in this article was No. 168 situated at Glen Mill, an old six-storey cotton mill requisitioned by the war office in Oldham, Lancashire. It lay in Wellyhole Street on the outskirts of the town and was sealed off with wire both from the main road and the railway line which ran at the rear. Part of Wellyhole Street itself was incorporated into the prisoner-of-war camp itself as a compound. The Commandant was Colonel Dennison.

The first prisoners to arrive at the mill were forty U-boat men, rescued after their submarine was depth-charged in the North Sea. As the war progressed, airmen displaced the sailors who, in turn, were sent in batches across the Atlantic. The Germans' genuine fear of their own U-boats led to a demonstration, in which furniture was smashed and thrown through windows, when they were told they were to be shipped to Canada. The Regimental Sergeant-Major quickly quelled the fears of the airmen — he visited each floor in turn, landing two or three well-aimed punches at each German 'spokesman' as he stepped forward to argue! Resistance crumbled in the face of the tough sergeant-major and the Germans were soon on their way to their ship at Liverpool.

Life at Glen Mill fell into a routine, and the boredom was punctuated by snap checks and searches which kept both guards and prisoners alert. Then, of course, the escapes began.

The first attempt was when the Lagerführer, Enigen Findesen, asked the Commandant if the prisoners could build a tennis court in the recreation field. As the work would involve levelling the ground from its present slope, giving the prisoners access to spades etc., Colonel Dennison suspected an attempt would be made to tunnel under the wire. He therefore agreed but said that the tennis court must be sited in the centre of the recreation ground.

Wellyhole Street, Oldham. Glen Mill was situated beyond the bridge on the right.

Above: **German prisoners watch a game on the recreation field at Glen Mill on Christmas Eve 1940 (IWM).** *Below:* **A pill-box still overlooks this derelict corner of Oldham.**

The court was built during leisure periods and, at times, as many as six hundred prisoners would be at work. A check was held each time the prisoners entered the working area by a guard in a hut at the gate to whom the prisoners handed their identity discs. These were hung on a numbered board which immediately showed how many prisoners had entered the field. However the boredom of POW camp guards is always exploited by escape-minded prisoners.

To prevent bunching at the gate, it had become the habit for one German to collect a handful of discs from the other prisoners and pass them to the soldier on duty; naturally defeating the object of the whole security check. On the afternoon of the proposed escape, through well-engineered 'jostling' at the gate, ten prisoners entered the field for only six discs handed in. Four prisoners were therefore at liberty to remain, concealed in the field, after the others had returned. By the end of the afternoon, the four men had been buried in a hole in the side of one end of the elevated tennis court. As the guard had returned every disc on the board to the prisoners as they left the field, all seemed in order.

The weakness of the plan was, however, that it was summertime. The prisoners dare not risk digging their way out until it was dark but, at the same time, they had to cross the field and squirm under the wire before nine o'clock, as their absence would then be noticed at roll-call. When the alarm was raised, all four were quickly recaptured in the Oldham area, making no attempt to 'use' the very real-looking, dummy revolvers they had made from bread, baked hard and shaped and polished. The only one to suffer was the negligent guard at the gate who was court-martialled and sentenced to three months in the 'glasshouse'.

Although the screening process at Kempton Park and the other reception centres was intended to weed out the 'black' Nazis, after the invasion of Europe, the increasing tide of prisoners meant that each camp inevitably had its share of die-hard Nazis. This was in addition to Russians, Poles and other soldiers press-ganged to fight for Germany. By the end of 1944, it was established that, of the 1,500 prisoners at Glen Mill, 350 were 'blacker than black'. These unrepentant Nazis terrorised the other prisoners, and the early, correct but easy relations between prisoners and guards deteriorated.

Feldwebel Gerald Hanel was typical of the young, violent Nazis who established authority inside Glen Mill. Hanel was a member of the Hitler Youth Movement and had joined the paratroopers at the age of seventeen.

Hanel arrived at Glen Mill during its most turbulent period. The British guards were fully extended and inside the mill, when the prisoners were on their own, discipline was non-existent. Bullies with home-made weapons which they used frequently, ruled the rooms of terrified prisoners.

Left: **The mill, photographed by Mr. Lockeyear on December 23, 1940 (IWM).** *Above:* **Glen Mill was demolished during the 1960s.**

Hanel and fifty other paratroopers of his division who arrived with him, had their first glimpse of conditions in the mill at dinner-time. When the cauldrons of food were brought into the dining-room, the Russian prisoners made a dash forward. They knocked the serving orderlies on one side and bending down, shovelled food with both hands into their mouths straight from the pots.

The paratroopers were fresh from the battlefields. They were young and the sense of discipline and racial superiority among them was strong. 'These Russians must be taught the sharpest lesson,' Hanel informed his comrades.

The next time food was brought into the dining-room, the paratroopers went into action. At a signal from Hanel, they descended on the Russians who were already feeding like pigs at the trough. Using fists, elbows and knees without mercy, the paratroopers dragged the Russians away from the food, and the Russians were chased to the other end of the hall.

The Russians did not accept their beating philosophically. They hated the Germans far more than the British guards.

Two nights later, it was the turn of the German prisoners to hold an exclusively German concert in the mill and they had built an elaborate stage for the occasion. As a reprisal, the Russians decided to smash it up shortly before the concert began.

But someone talked about the plan and the paratroopers ambushed the Russians as they descended on the stage. This time, the Germans had armed themselves with iron bars and wooden staves and even planks from which they had neglected to remove long nails. At the end of the battle the stage was undamaged but a score or more prisoners, largely Russians, had to be treated for severe cuts and abrasions.

Hanel and his paratroopers soon imposed order among the prisoners but it was a strictly Nazi type of order and the anti-Hitler element of older prisoners quickly came to heel. 'Trials' and beatings were frequent and suspected informers were dealt with mercilessly.

The paratroopers and others in the camp of the same type who now came forward began to take special pleasure in being awkward. They were ordered to salute British officers and agreed — but it was the Nazi salute they always gave. The paratroopers made difficulties about working. They said that before they left their bases, officers had informed them that, according to the Geneva Convention, flying personnel taken prisoner could not be forced to work. 'No work, no food,' was the British response. The Germans gave in but it was a hollow victory because whenever they were on a working party, they practised a 'go slow'.

Encouraged by the Nazis, the whole mill became escape-minded and those who did not intend to escape themselves, joined in the fun of keeping the guards on their toes. The prisoners would return from work with their pockets full of small stones picked up during the day and when the mill had settled down for the night, would throw the stones against the wire. The twanging made the edgy guards think that prisoners were trying to cut the wire and wild bursts of firing would rouse the neighbourhood.

Another method devised by the prisoners to cause annoyance was the launching of paper darts at night from the top floors of the mill over the wire into the street outside the camp. When this happened the guards were obliged to spend many weary hours searching for the darts in case they contained messages.

News of the obstreperous behaviour of the prisoners began to trickle through to the people of Oldham and the Nazis did not add to their popularity by bellowing marching songs whenever they were taken under guard outside the camp.

There was something frightening about the stiff, fierce-looking young men, so arrogant in bearing, and so lacking in human dignity that they could turn aside and spit at people standing on the pavement. More than once, the guards had to fight off outraged inhabitants.

When the Ardennes offensive occurred, the morale of the Germans in all camps increased, believing that they would soon be liberated. When the New Year brought bitter disillusionment, the prisoners realised, that if they were to be free, they would have to rely on their own initiative. Tunnelling took too long so other ways of escape had to be tried. The Nazis at Glen Mill decided on a plan which would offer the possibility of escape for any prisoners who were lithe and nimble and willing to take a chance.

At dawn, when the guards would be tired, selected prisoners would stage a row in the mill. This would not make the guards too suspicious because daybreak was often the time when many punishments imposed by the Germans themselves were carried out. But it would arouse their interest and keep their thoughts away from the wire. When the noise in the mill was at its height, other prisoners would sneak up to the wire, cut it, and as many as possible would get away.

The dawn on that early February morning

The view from Greenacres Cemetery, where Paul Hartmann was buried in February 1945, down the hill to where the mill once stood.

in 1945 could not have been more propitious for the prisoners. It was cold and misty. The chilly air struck through even the thick clothing of the guards on the catwalk and drained their vitality.

The plan worked. Some prisoners were outside the camp before the shots of the guards in the vicinity of the broken wire discouraged others from getting through. They crossed the road, darted up the hill on the other side and disappeared through the cemetery at the top.

On the way up the hill they were joined by a prisoner who had escaped in a most spectacular way. He had managed to get hold of a plank which he placed at a narrow angle against the wire. He was a gymnast who could perform remarkable feats and this was one of them. Taking a run, he used the plank as a spring board to hurl himself over the wire. He landed like a cat and the whole operation was performed at such speed that the guard had no time to fire at him before he vanished up the mist-shrouded hill.

It took a long time to establish how many prisoners had escaped. The moment the guards began shooting, prisoners who had been outside the mill fled inside. But at the roll-call they were insolent and disorderly and friends of the escaped prisoners foxed the staff by answering their names. At last the Commandant said he was not interested in guesses. He intended to know exactly how many prisoners he had in the mill and if the prisoners would not co-operate, they must take the consequences.

The prisoners soon saw that he meant business. The guards outside and inside the camp were doubled and the men on the catwalk trained their machine-guns directly at the prisoners inside the compound. The counting began. After men had been positively identified they passed in batches of fifty from the mill yard into the portion of the main road which had been wired off in front of the mill.

The day wore on slowly and in the cheerless weather the prisoners became restive. They sang Nazi songs, booed any British officers who went near them, and abused the guards.

Late in the afternoon, the sergeant of the guard entered the compound and drew a chalk mark along the road. 'See that the prisoners do not go over that line,' he said. 'If they do, challenge once. If that has no effect, open fire.'

One of the guards was John Jaffray, whose real job was No. 5 feeder on the Bofors gun guarding the mill against aircraft attack, but in emergencies, all soldiers were called in as guards. Apart from his instruction on the range, Jaffray had never fired a shot in his life. Now he was inside the wire controlling a rowdy, threatening mob of prisoners, which grew noisier every minute.

Jaffray did not feel unduly worried but, from time to time as the chalk-mark disappeared under the feet of the stamping men he warned them in his sharp Scottish voice to get back or he would fire. Sometimes the prisoners obeyed and made a token retreat. Sometimes. too, they paid attention to the Lagerführer who kept urging them to stop jostling. But when heavy rain began to fall the prisoners who had been identified began to shout that they wanted to go inside the mill and surged towards the gate. 'Get back,' shouted Jaffray.

The prisoners ignored his challenge and did not halt as he raised his rifle.

'It's now or never,' thought Jaffray. His clear orders were to shoot if the prisoners crossed the chalk-line and he intended to obey them, though he proposed to shoot over their heads. But in his excitement, he did not aim high enough and when he fired he saw to his horror that a prisoner in the front rank had suddenly collapsed.

The noise made by the prisoners, the catcalls, the shouting, the hand-clapping and nose thumbing, stopped as if it had been clicked off by a switch. The prisoners were so shocked and frightened by the shot that they did not attempt to touch Paul Hartmann who, after a few twitches, lay still on the ground. The only sound was the low moaning of another prisoner who was struck in the face by the bullet after it had passed through Hartmann's head.

The sharp crack of the shot brought officers and NCOs into the compound on the run. Two Germans were ordered to carry their dead comrade out of the compound. The Lagerführer was directed to get the prisoners behind the chalk line. Jaffray put the spent cartridge case in his pocket and was told to go to the guard-room. He had been on duty for over four hours.

The completed count showed that seven prisoners had got away but they were not at liberty for long. A girl railway porter spotted one prisoner early next morning near Castleton railway station a few miles from the camp. Two more were found at Wakefield in Yorkshire, and the other four in a party at Leeds, over thirty miles away. They had decided to try to reach the east coast of Yorkshire in preference to Liverpool, which was nearer, because they thought the search for them would be automatically concentrated in the Liverpool area.

Above: **Wellyhole Street itself was fenced off and used as an exercise yard for prisoners (IWM).** *Below:* **Echoes of the past. The pill-box is the only reminder of the former use of this quiet, windswept back-street.**

Paul Hartmann's shared grave, fifth from the end, at the German Soldatenfriedhof at Cannock Chase, Staffordshire which was formerly opened on June 10, 1967.

Left: **Hans Teske, photographed by a fellow prisoner, at POW Camp No. 116 at Hill Hall, near Epping, Essex. He is standing by the perimeter wire where he escaped from the camp several times to roam the local countryside.** *Above:* **On November 16, 1976, he returned with us to Hill Hall (used post-war as an open prison for such celebrities as Christine Keeler) to stand again on the same spot. Although still officially a German POW, we let him return home afterwards to Milton Keynes!**

By the end of the war, there were, all told, 7,200,000 prisoners in Allied hands. Those troops taken by the Allies as a result of the surrender were classed as 'disarmed personnel' to distinguish them from prisoners taken during the fighting.

In the United Kingdom, 158,000 prisoners were engaged on agricultural work; 50,000 were employed by the War Office, many clearing coastal defences, and 36,000 were occupied on camp duties including the dismantling of POW camps no longer required. Another 35,000 were employed by the Ministry of Works and 19,500 by the Air Ministry. Altogether 394,000 prisoners were elegible for repatriation from the UK when this began in September 1946. Senior officers were not included, neither were those known to be strongly pro-Nazi. These latter prisoners appeared before a committee every six months for examination about their political beliefs. In many cases, the prisoners entered the room, gave the Nazi salute and said, in greeting, 'Heil Hitler', knowing quite well that such actions meant instant extension of their imprisonment. Gerald Hanel persisted in his defiance for three years after the end of the war at Glen Mill.

Glen Mill proved an ideal choice for our prison camp story as a whole sequence of official photographs were taken there by Mr. Lockeyear when he visited the Mill on Christmas Eve, 1940. The pictures, censored at the time and taken for record purposes only, are now at the Imperial War Museum, London.

Life at Glen Mill was, by and large, typical of that in the several hundred POW camps in the British Isles. Robert Jackson, author of 'A Taste of Freedom' gives several pages to it in his fascinating book on life in British camps and the editor is indebted for his permission to include extracts in this account.

Unfortunately the Mill, taken over by Vitaform Rubber Company after the war, was demolished in the 1960s. When we visited Wellyhole Street, all we found was a large area of waste ground. However the detention cells on the opposite side of the road are still standing. We had wanted to pinpoint the exact location of the shooting on February 7, 1945 but when we called to see Mr. Jaffray, the guard concerned who still lives in Oldham, he declined to talk to us most forcibly.

The German who was killed, eighteen-year-old Paul Hartmann, was buried in grave AC11-60 in the Clarksfield Area of Greenacres Cemetery on the hillside overlooking the Mill on February 13, 1945. A swastika flag covered the coffin and two wreaths from his comrades lay on top. Sixty prisoners, under armed escort, were allowed to attend the funeral and gave the Nazi salute as the hearse entered the churchyard. On May 8, 1962, Hartmann's remains were exhumed and reburied in the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase — Block 3 Grave 137.

Feldwebel Wolfgang Rosterg, hung by fellow prisoners at Comrie Camp on December 23, 1944 was buried in the Jeanfield Plot (Grave 948) of Wells Hill Cemetery in Perth. He now lies buried at Cannock Chase Soldatenfriedhof in Block 4, Grave 207.

Nearby, in Block 3, Grave 491, lies Unteroffizier Gerhardt Rettig. His remains were moved to the German War Cemetery from Sheffield City Road Cemetery where he had been first buried in Grave 7167 in Plot B2 after his murder in Lodge Moor Camp on March 24, 1945.

Today, incredible as it may seem, there is still one German prisoner-of-war left in Britain. Obergefreiter Hans Teske fought with the 5. Fallschirmjaeger-Regiment in Tunisia and was awarded the Iron Cross First Class after the fighting at Kaktusfarm during the battle of Peter's Corner. He had already been awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class for rescuing a British soldier whilst under fire (from the British!) at Bou Arada. Teske was wounded and was captured in hospital in Tunis on May 7, 1943 and sent to the USA.

At the end of the war, Hans Teske was sent to England and imprisoned at a satellite camp of No. 116 at Hill Hall, near Epping, Essex. During this time he made himself a nuisance by escaping frequently to offer his charms to the local Land girls at Waltham Abbey.

As his former home was now in Eastern Germany, he was not repatriated and the British authorities allowed Teske to live outside the camp on a twelve-monthly parole basis. In June 1948, he applied for and was granted a transfer to Kent but, while the officials in Essex removed his name from their list, those in Kent failed to add it to their records.

All parole POWs were repatriated by Christmas 1948 — all that is except Teske. When he discovered that an error had been made, he pressed for his name to be included for repatriation but was refused.

Over the years he has pursued his case for official repatriation with Dr. Adenauer, Edward Heath (his Member of Parliament in Kent) and several German ambassadors. When the German government passed their POW Compensation Bill, awarding all those imprisoned after January 1947 one mark per day (increasing to five marks after January 1, 1949), Teske was excluded as his name did not appear in the official records. Teske estimates he missed out on several thousand pounds compensation. He told the editor that since 1970 he has not taken the matter further so he still lives in England technically a German prisoner-of-war!

Although thirty years separate these photographs, Hans Teske (standing beside a Nissen hut at Hill Hall) is pictured, then and now, as a prisoner-of-war!